THE INDEPENDENT

No 3,857 SATURDAY 27 FEBRUARY 1999 (IR80p) 70p



Snow blanketing the Swiss village of Biel. Avalanches have recently swept through many areas of the Alps and more are forecast this weekend. Report, page 3 *Rene Ritler*

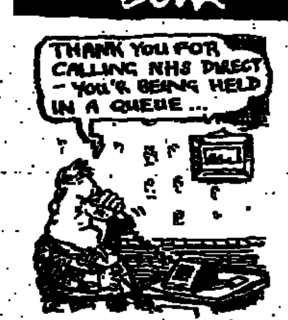
Call centres to control patients' access to GPs

By Jeremy Laurance
Health Editor

A REVOLUTION in the way patients gain access to medical care is being planned by ministers, reducing the pressure on the NHS by encouraging more people to treat themselves at home.

The controversial scheme involves replacing GPs with nurses as the first point of contact for patients by routing all calls to family doctors and hospitals through a single NHS telephone number.

Callers to the number would receive advice on treatment from the nurses, who would also book appointments where necessary. It would mean the creation of a new gateway to the NHS, which patients would pass through to get to their GP, traditionally regarded as the gatekeeper to the service.



The shake-up, which would have a bigger impact on patients than all the NHS reforms of the past decade, will involve a huge expansion of the existing NHS Direct helpline, which is staffed by nurses who provide advice to patients 24 hours a day. Instead of running in parallel to the existing GP and hospital service, the plan is to use NHS Direct as a filtering system to ensure that only those patients who need the attention of a doctor get it, while the rest are helped to look after themselves.

Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, told *The Independent* that the plan, which is to be tested in Northumberland, was still in the early stages of development and would have to prove its effectiveness before it was introduced nationally.

"If it works and it works well, it could be the biggest change in health care the country has ever known.

"It would mean a different form of access to primary and community services which, if it works, would be more satisfactory for patients, professionals and the health service," he said.

The plan was welcomed yesterday by the British Medical Association and patients' organisations but opposition MPs warned it would threaten the personal care provided by GPs. Alan Duncan, Tory health spokesman, said: "Such a scheme would be a highly centralised, impersonal system. The local link with the GP practice is very valuable. That is what primary care is about. To route everything through an enormous call-centre would be a backward step."

Ministers have been encouraged by the success of the NHS Direct helpline, which was introduced in three pilot areas last year to give patients instant advice and help to ease pressure on hospital accident and emergency departments. An unpublished survey by Sheffield University showed 97 per cent of callers were satisfied with the help they received.

The survey also showed that while 20 per cent of callers were advised to seek more urgent care than they had planned, such as by calling an ambulance, 40 per cent were advised to do less than they planned, such as going to bed with a hot drink rather than calling out the GP.

NHS Direct is being rolled out nationally from April, a year earlier than planned, but in Northumberland, one of the three original pilot areas, it is being pressed into its new role. From July all out-of-hours calls to GP deputising services will be routed through NHS Direct and all daytime calls are planned to follow at a later date.

Dr Kevin McKenna, the medical director of NHS Direct Northumbria, said that a lot of time and resources were being wasted in the NHS treating patients with coughs in casualty departments while patients with life-threatening conditions did not get the care that they needed.

The aim of the scheme was to direct patients to the best care for their situation.

"Work is under way by the NHS executive and the Cabinet Office and it is very much in the development stage. If it goes as it should it would change the whole of health care. That is why we have to be very tentative and ensure people have tools they can use."

THE INDEPENDENT
More readers, more awards



The Independent has won two major awards in the prestigious *What the Papers Say* awards, announced yesterday.

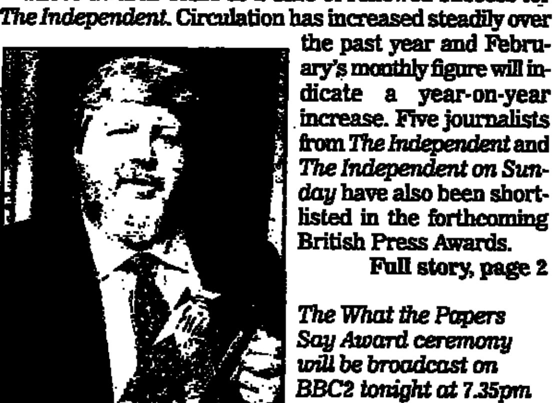
Simon Kelner, Editor of *The Independent*, was named Editor of the Year by a panel of media experts. (Kelner is pictured above receiving his award from Gerald Kaufman.) David McKittrick, the newspaper's Ireland correspondent, was named Correspondent of the Year.

In announcing the awards, the judges said of Kelner's achievements: "The paper suddenly recovered itself, starting to look and read much more like the publication which had initially enjoyed such terrific success after its launch in 1986.

"He stabilised the paper's circulation figures, and other journalists have greatly admired the way he so swiftly stopped the rot."

Northern Ireland was back in the headlines in 1998, said the judges, for the right and the wrong reasons. They added: "We felt nothing could be more appropriate in the year of the peace agreement than that the Correspondent of the Year award should go to Ireland correspondent David McKittrick – a second award winner for *The Independent*." McKittrick (below) has covered Irish affairs for 26 years and this is his fourth major award.

These awards come at a time of renewed success for *The Independent*. Circulation has increased steadily over the past year and February's monthly figure will indicate a year-on-year increase. Five journalists from *The Independent* and *The Independent on Sunday* have also been shortlisted in the forthcoming British Press Awards.



Full story, page 2

The What the Papers Say Award ceremony will be broadcast on BBC2 tonight at 7.35pm

Police damned by race inspection

By Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

RACE RELATIONS reforms are being ignored by police forces throughout the country and ethnic minority officers are continuing to leave because of harassment by white colleagues, a damning report by government inspectors has found.

A survey of all 43 forces in England and Wales has discovered that all but five – the Metropolitan Police is among them – have made no progress in improving race relations.

The study by the Inspectorate of Constabulary, to be published on Monday, will say that little improvement has been made in tackling racism since they last carried out a national inspection.

The report, which follows a detailed inspection last October of 15 forces in England and Wales, comes five days after the publication of the watershed inquiry into the Stephen Lawrence murder and will highlight the gulf between anti-racist policy statements and the reality of everyday policing.

Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, will tell chief constables on Monday that the lack of progress is unacceptable and change must be introduced rapidly.

The report is expected to say that "too many forces" are "disappointingly" failing to implement race relations programmes. It says the behaviour of some officers continues to be racist and unacceptable.

For the first time the Inspectorate has produced a table of the worst and best performing forces in terms of race relations.

The 43 forces in England and Wales were asked 15 questions about their anti-racism initiatives and policies. *The Independent* understands that the only forces considered to be making progress are the Metropolitan Police – condemned by the Lawrence report for its "institutional racism" – South Wales, West Yorkshire, Bedfordshire and Leicestershire.

Informants' fears, page 4

American firm may bid to buy Wembley

By Nick Harris

AN AMERICAN company is believed to be in the running to buy Wembley Stadium, the home of English football. SFX Entertainments, a New York-based firm specialising in the management of big venues and the promotion of sports events, is understood to be preparing a bid to buy Wembley in a move that could scupper England's bid to stage the 2006 World Cup.

The current owners, Wembley plc, have already agreed to sell the venue in a deal under which a renovated Wembley would be the centrepiece of the Football Association's 2006 bid.

But SFX is understood to be considering making an offer before Wembley's extraordinary general meeting on 11 March, which was due to rubber-stamp the FA-backed bid.

SFX, which has subsidiaries world-wide, is looking to expand its operations in Europe. One of its subsidiaries manages the basketball player Michael Jordan and another manages the top names in English sport, including Michael Owen.

Under the FA's deal, Wembley would be sold to the English National Stadium Development Company (ENSDC), a joint venture between the FA and Sports Council, for £103m. The deal is supported by Lottery funding. But it could be put on hold if other bidders come forward.

A third company, ENIC, which had a bid for Wembley rejected in January, yesterday said it also intended maintaining its interest in the venue.

A Wembley plc spokesman said: "We're very confident the ENSDC deal will go through and it's our understanding that our largest shareholders are backing it." Within the past few days, however, it has emerged that three of Wembley plc's independent directors have been lobbying shareholders to reject the ENSDC bid and consider other options.

Should the ENSDC deal fall through, the FA may be forced to look elsewhere for a location to build a centrepiece for its 2006 World Cup bid.



TODAY'S TELEVISION BACK PAGE

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

Australia	6.90 A$	Italy	5,000 L
Austria	40.00 Sch	Luxembourg	60.00 LFr
Belgium	90 BFr	Malta	0 65c
Canada	3.50 C$	Netherlands	5.50 guilder
Cyprus	1.20 C£	Netherlands	6.50 gld
Czech Republic	112 K	Norway	20.00 NKr
Denmark	18.00 DKr	Portugal	350 Es
Finland	19.00 FM	Singapore	S$8.55
France	16.00 FFr	Spain	325 Pta
Germany	4.50 DM	Sweden	23.00 SKr
Gibraltar	£0.80	Switzerland	5.00 SFr
Greece	700 Dr	Turkey	1,250,000 lira
Hungary	295 forint	USA	$3.50
Israel	12.00 Shk		

EU farm reforms in total disarray

BY STEPHEN CASTLE
in Königswinter, near Bonn

EUROPE'S CONTROVERSIAL plans to slash billions of pounds from its annual spending and usher in a new wave of agricultural reform were in disarray last night as a stand-off among EU leaders left the reform process deadlocked.

After a full day the 15 member states appeared even further from agreement, and a Franco-German split threatened a full-scale crisis ahead of next month's deadline for agreement of reforms.

Gerhard Schröder, the German Chancellor, told fellow premiers that the latest compromise plans, designed to freeze the EU's £30.7bn farm spending, were "unacceptable" because they watered down proposals to "stabilise" farm spending for 2000 to 2006.

Amid the worst Franco-German dispute for years, the French president, Jacques Chirac, outlined a different set of objections – repeating French hostility to key elements of a compromise reform package that Paris refused to endorse yesterday. Mr Chirac suggested a fresh start because the *plans would hit the income of* the EU's seven million farmers.

Jacques Santer, president of the European Commission, said he "wouldn't want to talk of a collapse". But one diplomat said: "The best possible outcome might be a crisis because that at least would concentrate minds."

Tony Blair said the UK's £2bn-a-year rebate was "non-negotiable". Mr Chirac said: "We cannot avoid a re-examination of the British rebate."

Talks broke up early on Friday without agreement when a compromise package was opposed by France, despite a concession over cuts in milk quotas – a reform opposed by France's Agriculture Minister, Jean Glavany.

Ministers discussed a 3 per cent annual reduction in all EU direct farm subsidies; a 3 per cent annual reduction in direct EU arable crop subsidies and a 1 per cent annual reduction in all other EU direct farm subsidies.

Germany, which holds the rotating EU presidency, argued *that the compromise would* add 9bn euros (£6.2bn) to the costs of the farm package over the years 2000-2006. Mr Blair sided with Mr Schröder over farm reforms, arguing that heads of government "have to get a very clear message to farm ministers about the need for real reform and a less costly agricultural package".

The deputy Dutch foreign minister, Dick Benschop, added: "It is very clear a signal was sent by the leaders to the agriculture ministers that the quality of their discussions has been insufficient."

France has agreed to the principle that most direct payments to farmers should be cut year on year. In exchange it *wants concessions over the* dairy sector as it believes its milk producers will not be able to compete in a free market.

And it is determined to oppose co-financing – proposal under which 25 per cent of agriculture spending would come from national, rather than EU, coffers.

The so-called Agenda 2000 *reforms are seen as vital prepa*ration for the EU's attempt to admit the former countries of eastern Europe.

Agriculture swallows up about half of the EU's spending and leaders accept that the system has to be reformed before countries such as Poland, which has a big and inefficient agricultural sector, can be brought in.

Spain, Portugal and Greece want increases in the EU's 35bn euro aid for poorer regions to ensure they do not lose when hard-hit eastern Europeans join. Mr Schröder said "solidarity is not a one-way street", and added that to say "spenders are good and savers are bad is a caricature".

Mr Schröder proposed a new initiative over duty free, which is due to be scrapped in the summer despite the objections of the German, French and British. The German Chancellor suggested VAT be imposed on the agreed date, but imposition of excise duty be delayed for two-and-a-half years. However, there was no sign of the unanimity needed to push the measure through.

THE PROPOSED FARM POLICY: WHO WINS AND WHO LOSES?



The proposal	**Freeze farm spending at £30.7bn a year – half the EU's spending – between 2000 and 2006**	**Cut guaranteed prices in line with free market. Beef, cereals, milk could come down by 30%**	**Year-on-year cut in payments that compensate farmers for being exposed to world markets**	**Co-financing by member states and EU until nations take 25% of direct payments EU now funds**	**Cap payments to big farmers – the millionaire grain barons**	**End of compulsory set-aside, helping clear way for cereal farmers to return to free market**
The Winners	Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark and the UK are in the vanguard. They claim to have efficient farmers and pay much more into the EU than they get out.	Big "factory" farmers in Britain, France, eastern Germany, Denmark, Holland and Sweden – those who can compete in a market where prices are not rigged.	Good for big farmers who will increase production in the freer market. Direct payments will go up to compensate for cuts in guaranteed prices	A weapon to help Germany cut its £8bn net contribution to the EU, which is backed by the UK and other countries that gain little from the CAP	*Hill farmers, smallholders* and southern producers will not be shedding tears. Despite previous reforms, the richest 4 per cent of land-owners still pocket 80 per cent of CAP cash	*Current plans would end* curbs on grain production and are backed by countries with big cereal producers such as the UK, Sweden, Denmark, Holland and France
The Losers	France, Ireland and "Club-*Med" states oppose the* freeze – not always on financial lines. Any country where farmers tend to take to the streets has worries.	Small hill farmers in Wales, *the Scottish highlands*, Ireland and Spain. France is calling for cuts on cereals but fears its dairy farmers will not be able to compete.	This horrifies broadest spec*trum of farmers. Small farm*ers will be forced to increase production to make up losses. Brussels suggests new funding to struggling areas.	France is the most stubborn *opponent, arguing that this* is the beginning of the end of the 37-year-old policy. Ireland is also alarmed, for financial reasons.	One of the few reforms *opposed by Britain, this* would cut payments to anyone receiving more than £100,000 per annum, hurting 5,550 farmers	Governments in Germany, *Austria, Greece, Ireland* and Portugal favour keeping a minimum guaranteed price coupled with a small set-aside provision.

'Independent' wins Editor and Correspondent of year awards

BY PAUL MCCANN
Media Editor

THE EDITOR of *The Independent*, Simon Kelner, won the Editor of the Year award at the annual *What the Papers Say* awards in London yesterday.

Mr Kelner, who was made editor of the paper last May, was nominated by the journalists who presented BBC2's *What the Papers Say* programme during its last series.

The judges said: "He stabilised the paper's circulation figures; other journalists have greatly admired the way he so swiftly stopped the rot. They nominated him in great numbers and the judges agreed."

The Independent also took the Correspondent of the Year prize for the work of the Ireland correspondent, *David McKittrick*. The judges said: "Nowhere could you find a better route map of the troubles of Northern Ireland than in the articles of *The Independent*'s David McKittrick".

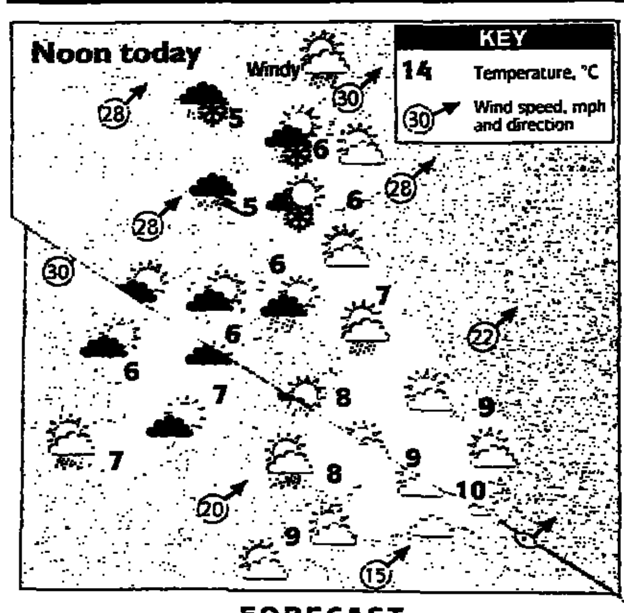
Other awards included a *new category of Front Page of* the Year, which was won by *The Sun*, for its headline, after the arrest of the singer George Michael in a Los Angeles public lavatory, which said: "Zip me up before you go go".

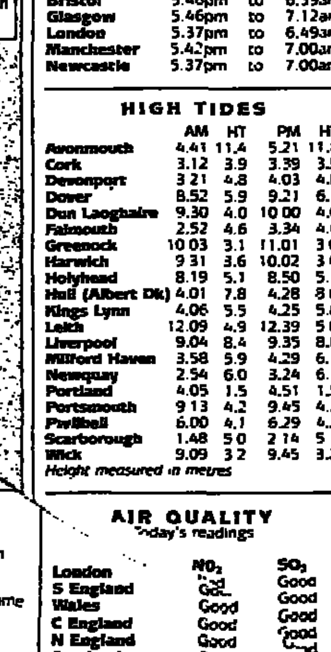
The Columnist of the Year *award went to Libby Purves of* the *Times*. The Peter Black award for writing on broadcasting went to the *Daily Mail's* Jaci Stephen. The judges said she was such a genuine enthusiast for her subject and could be so funny. "She has charm with teeth."

The Guardian's Nick Davies won Journalist of the Year for his "frankly terrifying reports on life in hidden Britain", included stories on the web of paedophiles who abused children in institutions in the north of England. The paper also won *Scoop of the Year for its* story about Peter Mandelson's home loan arrangement with Geoffrey Robinson.

■ Hosted by Clive Anderson, the *What The Papers Say* awards will be shown at 7.35pm today on BBC2.

BRITAIN TODAY





FORECAST

General situation: The south-eastern corner of England will begin cloudy with patchy rain, although it will steadily improve to leave a brighter, fresher afternoon. The rest of England and Wales will have sunny spells and blustery showers, the showers mainly in the west. Northern Ireland and western Scotland will be very windy with brief sunny spells and heavy showers, some of the showers may become *thundery and wintry over hills and mountains. Eastern Scotland will have sunny* spells and fewer showers.

Channel Is, SE & Cent S England, London, E Anglia, E Midlands: A cloudy start with patchy rain. Brighter but fresher this afternoon. A moderate south-westerly wind. Max temp 9-11C (48-52F).

W Midlands, Cent N, NW & SW England, Wales, Lake Dist, Isle of Man: Sunny spells, but also blustery showers. A fresh west to south-westerly wind. Max temp 7-9C (45-42F).

E & NE England: Decent sunny spells but feeling cold in the wind and a few showers are likely. A fresh south-westerly wind. Max temp 6-8C (43-46F).

SE Scotland, Edinburgh: Occasional sunny breaks, but rather windy with one or two showers breaking out. A fresh south-westerly wind. Max temp 5-7C (41-45F).

NE Scotland, Aberdeen: The odd shower and rather windy but some sunny spells possible. A fresh to strong south-westerly wind. Max temp 5-7C (41-45F).

NW & SW Scotland, Glasgow, N & W Isles: Frequent heavy showers, some of them thundery with hail and some sleet and snow in the highlands. A fresh to strong south-westerly wind. Max temp 3-6C (37-43F).

N Ireland: Windy with sunny spells and showers, the showers most frequent in the north and west. A fresh to strong south-westerly wind. Max temp 6-8C (43-46F).

OUTLOOK

Rain will spread to most areas tomorrow, preceded by snow in the highlands and accompanied by strong winds. The far north of Scotland will remain cold with wintry showers, but other areas will be mild. More rain will break out overnight and during *Monday* but it will stay very mild.

TRAVEL

London: A12 Green Man Roundabout. Leytonstone. Major roadworks on new M11 link road. Until 31st December.
Cambridgeshire A10 between Foxton and M11. Resurfacing and bridge maintenance work at Sheproth Mill. Until 28th February.
Bristol: M5 J18-19. Major Roadworks on Avonmouth Bridge. Until 23rd June 2001.
Warwickshire: M42 Between J10 Tamworth services and J9 Sutton Coldfield. Roadworks and contraflow. Until 23rd April.
Greater Manchester: A57. Narrow lanes Manchester-bound, due to Metrolink construction work. Until 28th February.
South Yorkshire: M1 Between J34 Tinsley Viaduct (A6109) & J34 Tinsley Viaduct (A6178). Sheffield. Carriageway reduced to 2 lanes southbound. Until 21st November 2000.
Gloucestershire: A40 Lansdown Rd, Cheltenham. Closed due to roadworks inbound. Diversions in place. Until 1st June.
Suffolk: A14 Felixstowe Docks. Roadworks, until 28th February.
AA Roadwatch: Call 0336 401777 for the latest local and national traffic news. Source: The Automobile Association. Calls charged at 50p per min (inc VAT).

LIGHTING UP

Belfast	5.55pm	to	7.17am
Birmingham	5.42pm	to	6.57am
Bristol	5.46pm	to	6.59am
Glasgow	5.46pm	to	7.12am
London	5.37pm	to	6.49am
Manchester	5.42pm	to	7.00am
Newcastle	5.37pm	to	7.00am

HIGH TIDES

	AM	HT	PM	HT
Avonmouth	4.41	11.4	5.21	11.8
Cork	3.12	3.9	3.39	3.9
Devonport	3.21	4.8	4.03	4.8
Dover	8.52	5.9	9.21	6.1
Dun Laoghaire	9.30	4.0	10.00	4.0
Falmouth	2.52	4.6	3.34	4.6
Greenock	10.03	3.1	11.01	3.0
Harwich	9.31	3.6	10.02	3.6
Holyhead	8.19	5.1	8.50	5.1
Hull (Albert Dk)	4.01	7.8	4.28	8.0
Kings Lynn	4.06	5.5	4.25	5.8
Leith	12.09	4.9	12.39	5.0
Liverpool	9.04	8.4	9.35	8.6
Milford Haven	3.58	5.9	4.29	6.1
Newquay	2.54	6.0	3.24	6.1
Portland	4.05	1.5	4.51	1.5
Portsmouth	9.13	4.2	9.45	4.3
Pwllheli	6.00	4.1	6.29	4.2
Scarborough	1.48	5.0	2.14	5.1
Wick	9.09	3.2	9.45	3.2

Height measured in metres

AIR QUALITY
Today's readings

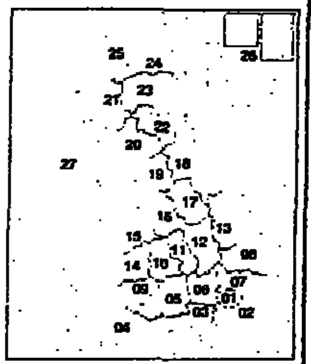
	NO_2	SO_2
London	Good	Good
S England	Good	Good
Wales	Good	Good
C England	Good	Good
N England	Good	Good
Scotland	Good	Good
N Ireland	Good	Good

SUN & MOON

Sun rises: 06.51
Sun sets: 17.37
Moon rises: 14.33
Moon sets: 05.21
Full Moon: March 2nd

WEATHERLINE

For the latest forecasts dial 0891 5009 followed by the two digits for your area. Source: The Met. Office. Calls charged at 50p per min (inc VAT).



YESTERDAY

EXTREMES

Warmest: Coltishall, Norfolk 13C (55F)
Coldest (day): Stornoway 6C (43F)
Wettest: Machrihanish 0.33 ins
Sunniest: Banff, Aberdeenshire 5.0 hrs

For 24hrs to 2pm Friday

	Sun hrs	Rain mm	Max °C	Max °F
Aberdeen	-	-	-	-
Anglesey	0.1	0.3	9	48
Aviemore	1.2	1.0	9	48
Belfast	0.3	0.3	11	52
Birmingham	1.6	0.3	10	50
Bournemouth	0	0.3	8	46
Bristol	0.1	0	9	48
Buxton	0.7	0.3	8	46
Cardiff	0.1	0	9	48
Clacton	2.8	0	7	45
Cromer	1.3	0.8	8	46
Edinburgh	n/a			
Exmouth	0	0	10	50
Fishguard	0	0.3	10	50
Folkestone	3.6	0	7	45
Glasgow	0.5	0.5	10	50
Hastings	3.8	0	8	46
Hove	3.7	0	8	46
Isle-of-man	0	0.3	9	48
Isle-of-wight	-	0	7	45
Jersey	0	0	8	46
Kendal	0	2.0	10	50
Leeds	0.9	0.3	11	52
Lerwick	0	6.9	8	46
Littlehampton	1.5	0.3	8	46
London	0	0.3	9	48
Lowestoft	0	0.3	7	45
Manchester	0	0.3	10	50
Margate	n/a			
Morecambe	0	1.3	9	48
Newcastle	0.5	0.3	12	54
Newquay	0	0	9	48
Norwich	0.5	0.5	8	46
Oxford	0.1	0.3	9	48
Ross-on-wye	4.6	0	11	52
Salcombe	n/a			
Scarborough	0	0	9	48
Shrewsbury	0.7	0.3	10	50
Southend	1.0	0	7	45
Southport	-	1.0	11	52
Stornoway	0	2.3	11	52
Swanage	0	0	9	48
Tenby	0.4	0.3	10	50
Torquay	0	0	11	52
Weston-s-mare	n/a			
Weymouth	0	0	9	48

24 hours to 6pm (GMT) Thursday: Information by PA WeatherCentre

RAIN OR SHINE...

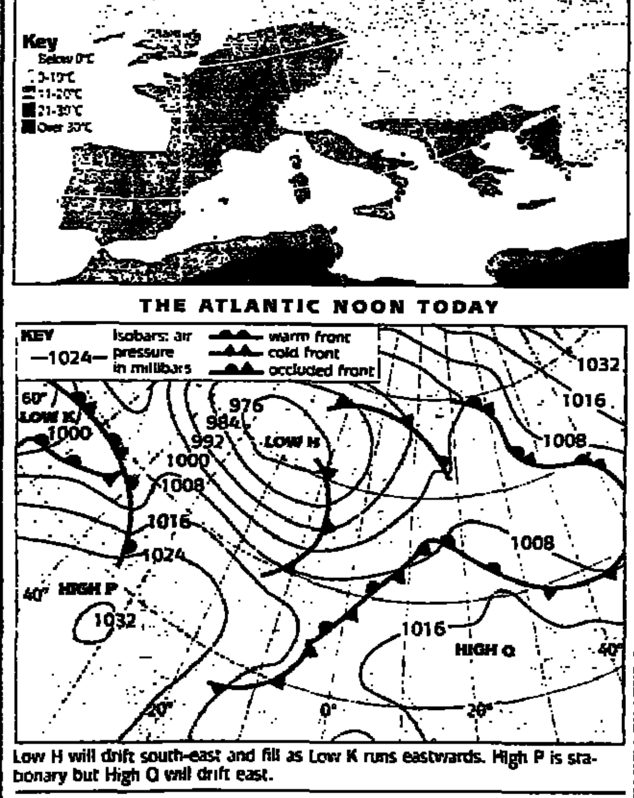
BAD WEATHER is playing its part in the drugs war. Officials in Burma, one of the world's main opium producers, revealed that drought is this year likely to halve the drug's source – the poppy.

Burma has *150,000 acres* of poppy fields producing 680 tonnes of opium a year, but the Golden Triangle of Burma, Laos and Thailand has not seen enough rain to deliver the usual big yields.

THE WORLD

EUROPE NOON TODAY

THE ATLANTIC NOON TODAY



Low H will drift south-east and fill as Low K runs eastwards. High P is stationary but High Q will drift east.

THE WORLD YESTERDAY

c, cloudy; dr, drizzle; f, fair; fg, fog; h, hail; hz, hazy; m, mist; r, rain; s, sunny; sh, showers; sl, sleet; sn, snow; ss, sandstorm; th, thunder. Most recent available figure, noon local time.

		°C	°F			°C	°F			°C	°F			°C	°F
Adelaide	f	29	84	Chicago	f	1	34	Kuala Lumpur	c	33	91	Port Stanley	dr	13	55
Algiers	c	21	70	Christchurch	c	16	61	La Paz	f	10	50	Prague	c	1	34
Alicante	c	15	61	Cologne	c	10	50	Lagos	c	33	91	Quebec	c	-2	28
Amsterdam	r	8	46	Copenhagen	r	5	41	Lima	f	28	82	Reykjavik	sn	-1	30
Anchorage	c	-7	19	Corfu	f	13	55	Lisbon	c	15	59	Rhodes	f	13	55
Ankara	f	5	41	Crete	f	15	59	Los Angeles	c	16	61	Rio de Jan	c	33	91
Athens	c	14	57	Dakar	f	21	70	Madrid	f	14	57	Riyadh	f	21	70
Atlanta	c	15	59	Dallas	c	22	72	Majorca	s	17	63	Rome	f	14	57
Auckland	f	21	70	Darwin	c	27	81	Malaga	sh	13	55	San Fran	f	12	54
Bahrain	c	22	72	Dubai	f	28	82	Malta	s	17	63	Santiago	s	27	81
Bangkok	c	34	93	Dublin	c	9	48	Manila	f	29	84	Seoul	c	9	48
Barbados	f	27	81	Edmonton	c	1	34	Mecca	s	32	90	Seychelles	f	30	86
Barcelona	c	14	57	Faro	c	14	57	Melbourne	c	19	66	Shanghai	r	10	50
Beirut	f	16	61	Florence	s	8	46	Mexico City	f	22	72	Singapore	f	31	88
Belgrade	s	7	45	Frankfurt	f	7	45	Miami	f	22	72	St Pet'burg	s	-2	28
Berlin	c	4	39	Funchal	f	17	63	Milan	s	12	54	Stockholm	sn	-1	30
Bermuda	f	21	70	Geneva	f	4	39	Mombasa	s	30	86	Sydney	c	21	70
Biarritz	s	14	57	Gibraltar	r	10	50	Montreal	c	-5	23	Tel Aviv	c	17	63
Bogota	c	18	64	Hanoi	c	27	81	Moscow	c	-1	30	Tenerife	f	19	[illegible]
Bombay	s	37	99	Harare	c	24	75	Munich	s	4	39	Tokyo	c	9	48
Bordeaux	[illegible]	9	48	Helsinki	c	-3	27	Nairobi	s	30	86	Toronto	c	1	34
Boston	sn	-2	28	Hong Kong	c	25	77	Naples	f	14	57	Tunis	f	18	64
Brisbane	sh	24	75	Honolulu	s	26	79	Nassau	f	23	73	Ulan Bator	s	-9	16
Brussels	c	8	46	Istanbul	c	9	48	New Delhi	f	22	72	Valencia	f	17	63
Bucharest	s	7	45	Jakarta	c	30	86	New Orleans	s	20	68	Vancouver	c	9	48
Budapest	f	7	45	Jeddah	s	29	84	New York	c	2	36	Venice	s	9	48
Buenos Aires	c	28	82	Jerusalem	c	14	57	Nice	f	14	57	Vienna	c	5	41
Cairo	f	17	63	Johannesburg	f	25	77	Nicosia	f	17	63	Warsaw	sn	1	34
Calgary	c	12	54	Karachi	s	31	88	Oslo	fg	2	36	Washington	sn	3	37
Cape Town	f	18	64	Kathmandu	f	23	73	Paris	c	4	39	Wellington	c	21	70
Caracas	c	29	84	Kiev	c	0	32	Peking	s	10	50	Zagreb	f	6	43
Casablanca	c	15	59	Kingston	s	25	77	Perth	f	36	97	Zurich	m	0	32

Hannibal's army flees the 'white hell' of the Alps, vowing never to return again

BY IMRE KARACS
in Landeck and Innsbruck

BEDRAGGLED LIKE Hannibal's army after its ill-fated trek through the Alps, holidaymakers poured out of the white hell of the Paznaun valley yesterday, many vowing never to return. The train out of Landeck, the beachhead of the international airlift, was packed with survivors from Galtür and Valzur, the two resorts devastated by avalanches earlier in the week.

Psychologists roamed the carriages, offering quick-fix therapy - this is, after all, Sigmund Freud's homeland.

The patients were easily identifiable. They were the ones clutching sports bags stuffed to the rims; the only piece of luggage allowed on to the helicopters that flew them to safety.

They all had a wild stare, and were enveloped in over-powering body odour. While their mobile telephones functioned even after the disaster, the victims had been robbed of simpler facilities of modern civilisation. They could converse with the other side of the globe, but were unable to take a wash. The army barracks that received them had not been kitted out with showers for 6,000 people.

And the people of Galtür had something else in common. Their initial fright had turned into anger, with one question on everybody's lips: "Why weren't we told of the dangers?"

Galtür's only escape route, the road through the narrow gorge leading to Landeck, had been blocked a week ago. Only the foolhardy went skiing, and as the snowdrifts closed in, even those eventually decided not to risk it.

Cooped up in their chalets, the guests tried to find indoor diversions, patiently waiting for the end of their incarceration. It was all a bit inconvenient, but there was no inkling of anyone's life being in peril.

On the contrary. "On Monday afternoon there was a meeting with the people from the local avalanche committee," recalls Stan Berings, a Dutch survivor of Galtür. "They said to us, 'There is no problem. No danger at all. There hasn't been an avalanche here for hundreds of years'. There was only a little information available.

"We were watching TV and someone said: 'Hey, look, they're saying there is a level five avalanche warning for Galtür'." Level five is the highest. Still, the experts reassured the tourists that Galtür was immune.

The next day, at 4pm, the lethal cloud of powdery snow struck at 150 miles an hour. Those caught out in the streets died instantly. The avalanche cleared a path 100 metres wide through the resort, tossing buildings aside like so many doll's houses. There was simply no escape.

Even those who had played safe by staying indoors were vulnerable. It was pot luck whose building stood in the way of the elements, and on what floor they were staying.

The path of the unpredicted catastrophe could not be foretold. The sirens sounded after what many assumed had been an explosion. By yesterday, 37 bodies had been recovered after the avalanches and one girl was still missing.

A ski-lift operator from Galtür confirms that the professionals had been aware of the possibility of disaster, and were surprised by the avalanche committee's assessment. "I simply do not understand why they underestimated the danger," said the man, asking that his name be withheld. "It was like dynamite up there. People shouldn't play with it."

In Valzur, a smaller resort down the valley, the tourists had at least been forewarned by the fate of neighbouring Galtür. The avalanche committee could therefore chart the direction of the coming disaster.

"We had already had two smaller avalanches," says Styn Carron, a Belgian holidaymaker. "We were told which part of the village was in danger, and which relatively safe. This turned out to be the case."

On Wednesday afternoon Mr Carron was in the safer zone, protected to some extent by trees. "I was watching TV, heard a bang and the TV set fell down." Trapped in his room, he calmly packed his belongings and hunkered down for the night. At daybreak the helicopters arrived.

Yet despite the warning, seven people perished in Valzur, in the area officially described as "less safe". They had chosen to stay there on that fatal afternoon.

The people of Landeck, who live off tourism, have been appalled with the way they feel tourists have been deliberately put at risk.

The exceptional weather had been forecast more than two weeks ago. In their minds, the road to Galtür should have then been closed and preparations made for a mass evacuation. Instead, the local authorities made a business-friendly decision. The road stayed open, until buried by the heaviest snowfall seen in the Tyrol in nearly 50 years.

The responsibility for all those lost lives should not, though, be attributed entirely to Tyrolese greed. The local economy lives off the snow, and the thrill that comes with it. Tourists pampered by their mundane urban lives come here seeking a light work-out and a taste of danger. If the Tyrol shuts down, they will go looking for action somewhere else.

But Tyrol, awaiting the worst avalanches yet as the deadly white blanket begins to melt and slips towards the chalets in the valleys, is open for business. The hotels are fully booked throughout the region.

The trains that arrived at Landeck yesterday morning were disgorging thousands of people dressed in designer anoraks, armed with virgin skis. They had heard of the wonderful powder snow of the Paznaun valley, and cannot wait to try out their new gear. Let nobody say that they have not been warned.



Rescue workers at army barracks in the Tyrolean town of Landeck yesterday after returning from Galtür *Reuters*

Skiing risks 'still high'

BY RHIANNON BATTEN

OFFICIALS SAID yesterday that the threat of further avalanches in the Austrian Alps remains high through the weekend, with above-freezing temperatures warming the masses of snow hanging on mountainsides.

Vanessa Haines, information services manager at the Ski Club of Great Britain, says people should travel as planned but expect restricted skiing in certain areas. Because avalanche risks are still high skiers should contact their tour operator to check accessibility to their intended resort. If disruptions are likely, holidaymakers will have been contacted by their tour operator, according to Jackie Gibson of the Association of British Travel Agents. Ms Gibson said that of the 30 or so companies she spoke to yesterday, "without exception, where the booked resort is inaccessible, companies are offering holidays in alternative resorts or a full refund".

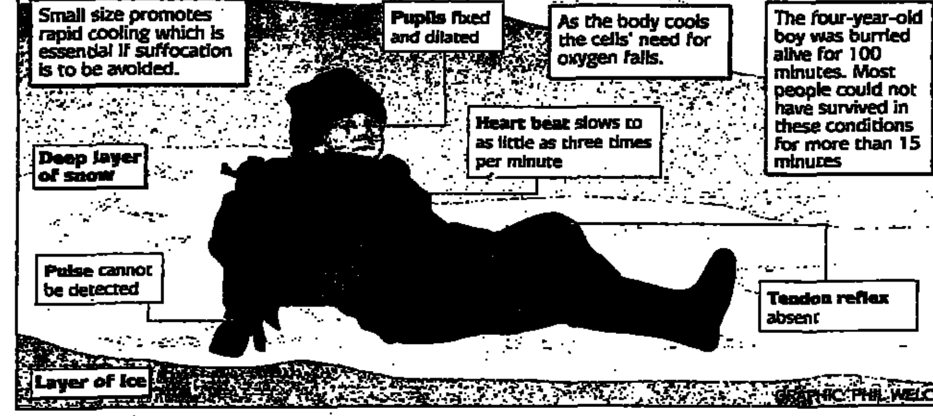
The main areas still experiencing problems are St Anton, Ischgl, Lech and Zürs in Austria and the Jungfrau region of Switzerland. The three main resorts, Mürren, Wengen and Grindelwald, bore the brunt of the recent bad weather and are still cut off. Where the lifts and runs are open the skiing is said to be fantastic.

To put the disruption into perspective, Ms Gibson stressed that "out of 800 resorts in Austria, only 15 are experiencing problems, and well over 90 per cent are running as normal". Most other European ski destinations were getting back to normal, she added.

However, with more snow forecast for the middle of next week, the avalanche risk is still high and Ms Haines advises anyone considering off-piste skiing to hire an avalanche transceiver and take a qualified mountain guide with them. Transceivers can be hired for a week from the Ski Club of Great Britain (0181 410 2000) – £10 members, £20 non-members.

Boy survived under snow because of his small size

BY JEREMY LAURANCE
Health Editor



THE FOUR-YEAR-OLD boy who is being called the "miracle of Valzur" almost certainly survived being buried by an avalanche in the Austrian Alps because his body was cast into a state of "suspended animation" by the freezing conditions, an expert said yesterday.

His small size will have helped him survive the 100 minutes he spent buried alive by promoting the rapid cooling that is essential to avoid suffocation. Doctors say few people can last more than 15 minutes beneath the snow because of the lack of oxygen. As the body cools, its need for oxygen falls and if that happens fast enough the victim can avoid suffocation. Children have a better chance of survival than adults because they have a greater surface area relative to their weight and so lose heat quicker.

The boy was found after almost two hours under the deep layer of snow that swept into the village of Valzur on Wednesday. Rescuers at first thought he was dead because he appeared not to be breathing and they were unable to find a pulse. But after strenuous attempts to resuscitate him, he began to show signs of life.

Dr Michael Tipton, a specialist in thermal physiology at the University of Portsmouth, said the cold would have cast the boy's body into a state of suspended animation which would be almost indistinguishable from death.

"You see this when people are rescued from the bottom of a freezing river after an hour when you would normally expect them to drown in minutes. It is very easy to mistake the profoundly hypothermic for the dead.

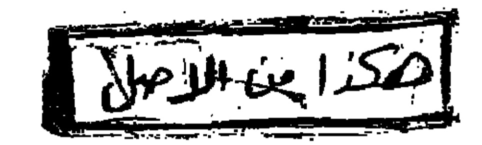
"Their hearts beat very slowly, their breathing is very low, their pupils are fixed and dilated and their tendon reflexes are absent."

Once dug out of the snow, the boy was wrapped in thermal blankets and flown by helicopter down the valley to Galtür before being transferred to hospital at Zams, where he was still recovering yesterday.

Doctors working in casualty departments say that a body is not fully dead until it is warm and dead. As rapid cooling of a living human takes place, the body shuts down because the cells require less oxygen. The cooling of the brain stem also has a direct effect suppressing the organs' activity.

Dr Tipton, who is also head of the environmental medicine unit at the Institute of Naval Medicine, said: "For a person who falls into freezing water the question is whether the cooling effect occurs quickly enough so that the oxygen conservation effect on the body prevents suffocation. If you cool quickly the oxygen you already have on board will last a lot longer.

"Some adults have survived in this way but those that fare best tend to be children, who cool rapidly due to their greater surface area to weight ratio. I would guess that something similar happened in this case."



Lawrence inquiry: Home Office moves quickly to limit damage as Straw faces call for resignation

Informants will be given safe houses

BY COLIN BROWN AND SARAH SCHAEFER

POLICE INFORMANTS who may be at risk after being identified in the Lawrence report could be given "safe" houses or help with moving to new addresses, the Home Office said yesterday as ministers came under fierce attack for the series of blunders in the aftermath of the inquiry.

There was anger and dismay among residents, the police and Labour and Tory MPs at the disclosure of the names and addresses of people who had tipped off the police about the key suspects for the killing, in the appendix to the report of the Lawrence inquiry.

The Home Secretary was not in the Commons yesterday to face calls for his resignation, being out of the country on a "long-standing personal engagement". But the Home Office continued to shrug off the blame for the blunder that led to recriminations between the police forces involved in the investigation.

A spokesman for Kent police – whose officers obtained statements from people who refused to trust the Metropolitan Police – spoke of the anger within his force at what had happened. "For them to see the trust they put in us torpedoed by some other organisation makes us extremely angry," he said.

It emerged that Mr Straw is unlikely to have read the appendix. "Get real," said a government source. But the Tories last night claimed a senior civil servant had been seconded from the Home Office to act as inquiry secretary and should have known about the blunder before the report was released.

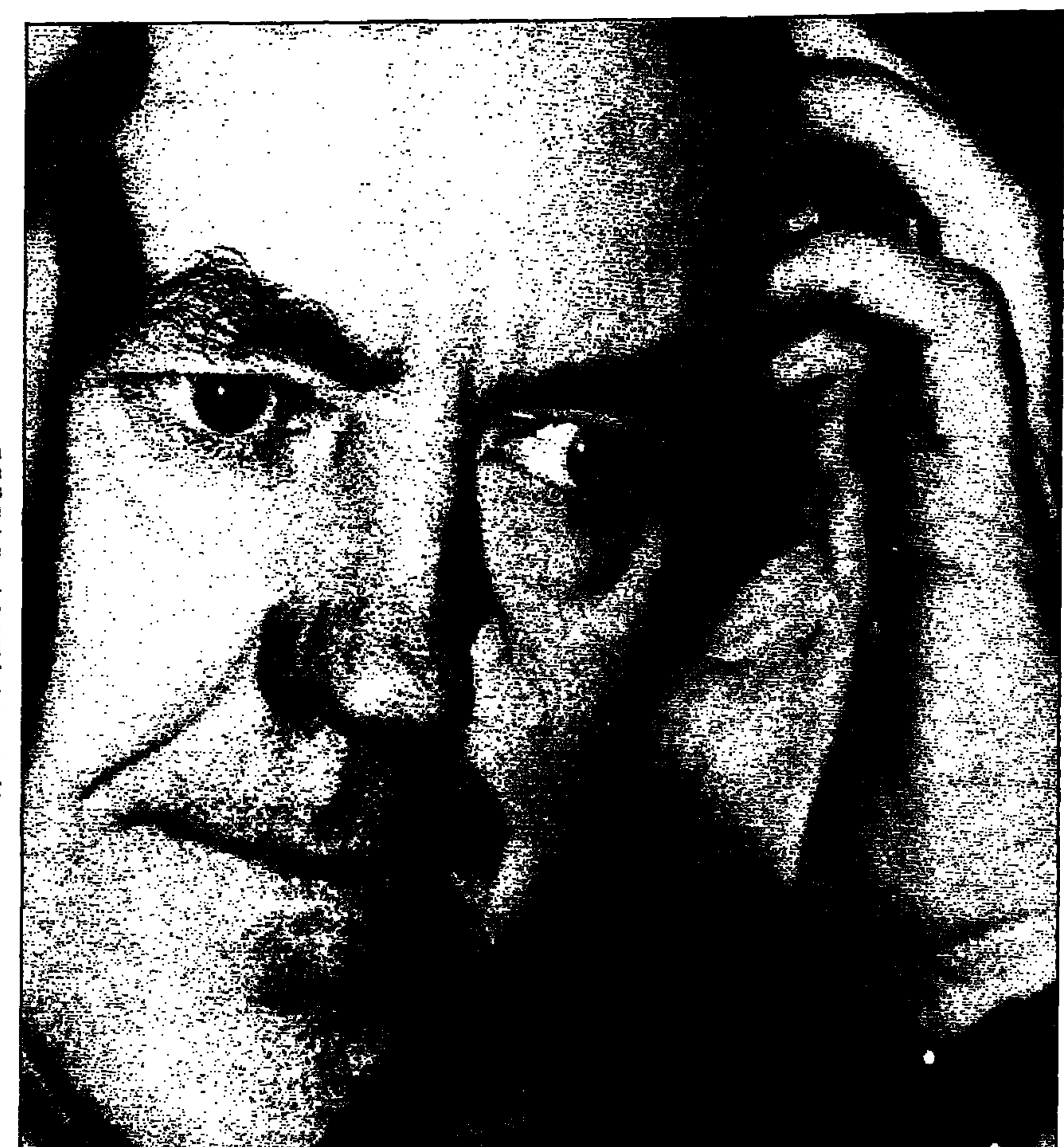
MPs and police warned that it would also severely undermine the recent appeal by Mr Straw for the public to help the police and end the "walk on by" society. One Labour MP added that it might stop people coming forward with information about the recent killing of a young black man in the Lewisham area of south London, not far from where Stephen Lawrence was killed.

The Metropolitan Police believe a number of those who gave information to police investigating the Lawrence murder could be at risk because they have been identified. Paul Boateng, a Home Office minister, said "appropriate protection measures" had been put in place. "The Home Office stands ready to offer any assistance which the police or the local authority believe necessary," he assured MPs.

Home Office officials confirmed that residents in the Eltham area, where Stephen was killed, would be offered temporary "safe" houses or help to sell up and move to another part of London. "They will be offered relocation, if necessary," said a Home Office source.

Mr Boateng told the Commons that the publication of the names was a "serious and regrettable error" but said the inquiry team under Sir William Macpherson of Cluny had accepted "full responsibility". In one sense, the Home Office was only the "printing shop" for the inquiry, Mr Boateng said. "This is not a matter that can be laid at the door of the Home Office."

Roger Gale, Tory MP for Thanet North, said Mr Straw should have offered his resignation. But Mr Boateng urged MPs not to allow "this error to sidetrack us in our determination to carry forward the recommendations in this report".



Sir Paul Condon scratches his head during the Operation Bumblebee roadshow *Paul Hackett/Reuters*

Police dig for woman's body

BY JASON BENNETTO
Crime Correspondent

POLICE INVESTIGATING the mysterious disappearance of a woman were last night digging up the back garden of the home of her former husband, a millionaire architect.

Argentinean-born Gracia Morton was last seen 15 months ago when she left her flat in west London to take her four-year-old daughter to school. Mrs Morton, 40, then visited her estranged husband, Jonathan Morton, who lives in nearby St Ann's Road, Holland Park.

Police yesterday arrested a man in connection with the disappearance. About 20 officers went to Mr Morton's £400,000 three-storey terrace house yesterday morning. Police later put a blue tarpaulin over the back garden and started digging.

The home had been searched before in November 1997, with a cottage Mr Morton owned in Oxfordshire.

Mrs Morton, a former professional violinist, came to England 11 years before her disappearance. She went missing in November 1997. Closed circuit television pictures showed her leaving her flat to take her daughter to nursery school.

Mrs Morton was in the middle of divorce proceedings when she went missing and a large amount of money remained untouched in her bank account.

Her husband told detectives that on the day of her disappearance she had stayed for an hour at his home, then left. Her car was later found near by.

Concern grew after the part-time charity worker failed to meet her brother-in-law and Mr Morton the following evening, and her relatives alerted the police. There was no indication at her flat that she had intended leaving.

Her sister, Constanza Lezama, said last year: "There is no reason to believe she committed suicide, she loved her daughter too much.

"We do not know what happened, but we are never going to give up trying to find out."

Murder witness to sue over memorial arrest

BY KATHY MARKS

A PROTECTED witness in the Stephen Lawrence case is to sue the Metropolitan Police over an incident last year in which he was arrested on suspicion of vandalising Stephen's memorial plaque.

Lawyers for the young man, known only as Witness B, will issue a writ next week seeking "substantial" damages for false imprisonment and wrongful arrest. The marble plaque in Eltham, south-east London, where Stephen was murdered, has been vandalised several times, most recently on Wednesday night, when white paint was daubed on it hours after the release of the public inquiry report into the police investigation of Stephen's death.

Witness B was arrested and questioned last May after a hammer attack on the plaque. The hammer was left at the scene, and the incident was captured by a surveillance camera, which has since been replaced by a dummy.

Police later arrested Stuart Hollingdale, 32, from Penge, who was jailed for two and a half months in June. Police found literature from extreme right-wing groups such as Combat 18 and the National Front at his home. Witness B's solicitor, Mark Bowen, said yesterday that the writ would allege that there had been no grounds for arrest. "No reasonable person could say that the person in the video matches my client," he said. "The only similarity is that both are white.

"My client cannot understand why, at a time when he was helping police, he was arrested. The arresting officer knew he was a protected witness." Witness B made a statement in November 1993, seven months after Stephen was killed, in which he said that he had seen Neil Acourt and David Norris, two of the five suspects, near the scene at the time of the murder. He said he had been on a passing bus.

However, he later said that he was not sure if he had seen Neil Acourt or his brother, Jamie, and he was unable to pick out Norris at an identification parade. Mr Bowen said that Witness B was "devastated" by the inquiry report's apparent acceptance of the police's assertion that he was a "Walter Mitty" character and a habitual liar. "He accepts that his evidence was not of the highest quality, but he did his best," he said.

"Since the murder he has lost all his friends, he has rarely been in employment, he has had to move from area to area, and he has had threats to his life. He wishes that he had never got involved."

Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, and Stephen's parents, Neville and Doreen, visited the memorial plaque on Thursday soon after the latest vandalism.

Yesterday there was a steady stream of visitors.

TV locations to star in UK tourism push

BY ANDREW BUNCOMBE

EVERYONE SEEMS to know the fairytale success story of the Crown Hotel at Amersham after the release of the equally fairytale film, *Four Weddings and a Funeral*.

More specifically they know about the Elizabeth I Suite, next to the courtyard, where Hugh Grant and Andie McDowell spent a night of passion in the four-poster bed.

Things at the Buckinghamshire hotel have never been the same since.

"Ever since the film we have been inundated with couples who want to spend the night in that room. The suite is currently booked up for the rest of the year," the rooms manager, Catherine Rice, said yesterday.

From Carnforth Station in Lancashire, where Trevor Howard and Celia Johnson looked wistful in *Brief Encounter*, to Sleddale Hall near Penrith where the cast of *Withnail and I* camped it up, appearing in a film can have a tremendous effect on a location's wider appeal.

Yesterday the Government recognised the importance of such stardom when it revealed a 15-point plan to boost Britain's tourism industry. Chris Smith, the Secretary of State for Culture announced that, as part of a "Tomorrow's Tourism" initiative, locations and attractions linked to films and television series will receive special government backing.

The list of locations that have become famous for featuring as fictitious places is almost endless. Goathland in North Yorkshire is perhaps more glamorously known as the home of TV series *Heartbeat*, while the tiny Scottish village of Pennan was the setting for Bill Forsyth's 1983 film *Local Hero*.

Meanwhile, the cob at Lyme Regis played itself in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and no one made any attempt to disguise Sheffield in *The Full Monty*. Grimethorpe near Barnsley starred as Grimley in the film *Brassed Off*, the stars of which – including Ewan McGregor – remain in touch with the community.

"They were great and the film created a lot of interest," said Andy Kershaw, a co-ordinator at the town's local resource centre.

Jo Lesley, spokeswoman for the British Tourist Authority (BTA) said yesterday: "An awful lot of overseas visitors only learn about Britain through what they see in films and on television.



Chris Smith: 'Visitors give us high marks'

"At our calls centre in New York last year we took 400,000 calls. The second most popular location – after England – was Scotland and more than a third of those callers said they wanted to visit because they had seen either *Rob Roy* or *Braveheart*."

Saltram House in Devon, the Dashwood home in *Sense and Sensibility*, has seen a 57 per cent rise in visitors since the film was released in 1995 and Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, used in *Mrs Brown*, has seen a 25 per cent increase since the film came out.

The Travel Bookshop in west London has seen a surge of interest after its inspiration for the bookshop in the yet to be released film *Notting Hill*, also starring Hugh Grant.

"We have had lots of people coming in here asking about the film," said the manager, Jim Blackburn. "I expect once the film is released there will be a lot more. We are not going to be shy about it."

Tourism is Britain's single biggest invisible export and last year directly earned the country £12.7bn with a total value to the economy of more than £50bn. In all 25.7 million people visited from overseas. The BTA hopes that by next year the numbers will have risen to 27.5 million, bringing in directly a total of £14.7bn.

As part of this drive Mr Smith announced yesterday the setting up of a new body that will co-ordinate the regional authorities. These will be supported by the Government, especially in the regeneration of traditional resorts that have declined as a result of cheap holidays abroad.

Mr Smith said: "Tourism is one of our most important industries. It has the potential to create even more jobs, generate more wealth and help rejuvenate rundown areas. To maximise tourism's contribution to the economy and to our vision for Britain we need to work with the industry to an agreed plan."

Other initiatives will include a unified grading system for accommodation, designed to make it easier for visitors to choose where to stay as well as promoting better standards within the hotel trade.

Mr Smith said: "Visitors to Britain give us high marks for our heritage but not so high marks for the quality and value for money of accommodation."

The grading will award stars and be partly administered by the AA and RAC, who run their own hotel awards schemes.

MOVIES WHERE THE LANDSCAPE WAS PART OF THE STORY



WITHNAIL AND I
Sleddale Hall near Penrith

LOCAL HERO
Pennan, Aberdeenshire

GET CARTER
Gateshead, Tyne and Wear

BRIEF ENCOUNTER
Carnforth Station near Lancaster

BRASSED OFF
Grimethorpe near Barnsley

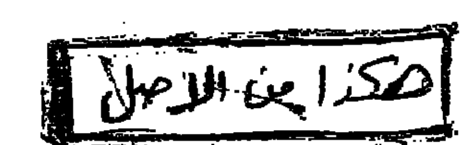
THE FULL MONTY
Sheffield

SHAKESPERE IN LOVE
Broughton Castle near Banbury

THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN
Lyme Regis

MRS BROWN
Osborne House on the Isle of Wight

FOUR WEDDINGS AND A FUNERAL
Goldington's Manor in Hertfordshire



Archer's son faces share-deal charge

JAMES ARCHER, son of the Conservative peer and a leading light in the notorious "Flaming Ferraris" group of City traders, could face criminal charges over allegations of irregular share dealing.

BY STEVE BOGGAN

Mr Archer, 24, and two of his colleagues at Credit Suisse First Boston were suspended earlier this week pending investigations into possible manipulation of trades on the Swedish Stock Exchange. Swedish authorities say their financial police and criminal courts could become involved.

The alleged irregularities are thought to involve sharebuying in Stora, a Swedish pulp company, and possible "market manipulation".

Mats Wilhelmsson, head of market surveillance in Sweden, said: "The sums are not really relevant, but the actual trades are. There were trades that led to one in particular and the value of these trades was around [£500,000]."

He said he could reveal no details of what was alleged to have been wrong with the dealings because of the possibility of prosecutions.

Mr Archer and his suspended colleagues, David Crasanti, 34, and Adrian Ezra, 31, are in a group of "index arbitrage" traders known as the "Flaming Ferraris" because of their penchant for £14 cocktails of rum, calvados and blue Curacao.

They exploit tiny anomalies between index prices and futures contracts, placing bets of up to £3bn to make worthwhile profits. They – and 13 colleagues spread around London, Hong Kong, America, Europe and Australia – are rumoured to have earned Credit Suisse First Boston (CSFB) £100m last year, sharing a £5m bonus.

The group, led by Mr Crasanti, a former wrestler and economics graduate from Princeton, works minimum 12-hour days under extreme pressure to capitalise on a complex system, using advanced computer programmes to identify the edge that makes a profit.

Mr Ezra, a former Indian squash champion and Harvard graduate, is said to have told a friend: "The beauty of the system is that it's so complicated few people would be able to understand the way we work."

The suspended men and their other London workers, Denis Albert and Conor Campbell, have a reputation for high living. Mr Archer is said to earn £250,000 a year and have an arrogant streak.

Educated at Eton and Brasenose, Oxford, where he studied chemistry, Mr Archer was in the loutish Assassins drinking club at university. His group's nickname came from a cocktail invented by Thai Dang, who owns a Vietnamese restaurant in west London.

Thai Dang said yesterday: "They spend a lot of money and come here regularly, but they always behave impeccably."

In *The Wharf*, a weekly paper based near CSFB's headquarters, one ex-collegemate journalist described Mr Archer variously as a "decent, kind and clever" man.

Another wrote: "Think of the stereotype of the Oxford undergraduate, and a champagne-swigging Hooray Henry staggers into view. Double it and you're looking at James Archer."

Neither Mr Archer nor his father was available for comment yesterday.



"Flaming Ferraris", young millionaire City traders (from left): Conor Campbell, Adrian Ezra, James Archer, Denis Albert (rear) and team leader David Crasanti outside a London restaurant *Julian Simmonds/Sunday Telegraph*

Butter firm loses court tax action

CUSTOMS AND Excise won a High Court order yesterday that stops the New Zealand dairy giant Anchor Foods from selling its assets to avoid an alleged £270m import duties bill.

But Customs had to give Mr Justice Neuberger an undertaking to pay damages to Anchor if the dairy company eventually won the action and showed that it had suffered losses. The judge also granted leave to both parties to take his rulings to the Court of Appeal.

Anchor, a wholly-owned UK subsidiary of the New Zealand Dairy Board, wanted to sell off all of its assets for £9m to a new NZDB company in the UK created for the purpose.

Customs claim this is a "gross undervaluation" of Anchor, designed to leave behind the import duties debt. Its own accountants have valued Anchor at £30m to £100m.

The judge told Anchor, which is to challenge Customs' demand for import duties at a VAT and Duties Tribunal, to provide more information on its value to Customs, which would then be "duty bound" to tell the accountants it was employing.

If there was any reconsideration of the value of the company, the accountants employed by Customs would also be under a duty to tell the court.

Graeme Milne, the Anchor chairman, said: "We are disappointed with this decision. But the judge left it open for us to challenge the injunction and we are confident about the valuation of the company and are sure the whole matter is a proper transaction on our part."

Customs came to the High Court on Thursday seeking the order to freeze Anchor's assets,

BY STEPHEN HOWARD

which employs 413 people in the UK, until the hearings on the import duties are completed.

David Pannick QC, for Anchor, had told the judge the company had to sell its assets so it could "maintain its credibility" with banks and suppliers.

Mr Pannick said Mr Milne agreed that his company was selling the business to New Zealand Milk (NZM) because of the debt claims by Customs.

Richard McCombe QC, for Customs, had told the judge: "The company only seems to make a profit of less than half a per cent before tax. How does it not make a profit when it is known to have 30 per cent, by far the largest share, of the UK dairy produce market."

The sale to NZM would leave behind "only the debt owed to Customs".

He added: "The proposed transfer appears to have no commercial purpose other than to rid the business of that debt."

Mr McCombe also questioned whether "a significant part of Anchor's profits are repatriated to New Zealand and not reflected in Anchor's profit figures".

Mr Justice Neuberger said in his ruling he was "sceptical" about the Anchor valuation evidence from the Customs accountants. But he said the injunction would not on the face of it damage Anchor business.

"This is not a case of an arm's length sale by the defendant [Anchor] of its assets on the open market. It is the transfer of the whole of AFL to a new party formed for that purpose and owned by the company, which effectively owns AFL."

IN BRIEF

Detectives accused of corruption

TWO SENIOR detectives working with the National Crime Squad and the National Criminal Intelligence Service have been suspended after allegations of corruption and malpractice. The officers have been accused of operating a telephone fraud racket.

Meningitis alert in Antrim

MORE THAN 200 children and teachers at the All Saints Primary School in Ballymena, Co Antrim, are being vaccinated against meningococcal septicaemia after two pupils were taken to hospital suffering from the disease. The boys, aged four and five, were said to be in a stable condition.

Holyrood invitations yet to go out

THE GOVERNMENT insisted foreign dignitaries would be given enough notice of the 1 July opening ceremony of the Scottish Parliament, even though no invitations have yet been sent. Plans are still being drawn up for the event and it is likely the Queen will play a big role.

Police compensation 'inadequate'

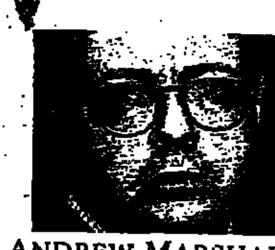
A FORMER policewoman has received £20,000 after winning her claim of sex discrimination against North Yorkshire Police. Former Chief Inspector Lyn Smith said yesterday: "This only in part compensates for the loss of salary, pension rights and career potential that I have suffered."

Boy, 11, in £10,000 computer scam

AN 11-YEAR-OLD Sunderland boy masterminded a £10,000 scam copying computer games, piracy investigators said yesterday. The European Leisure Software Publishers Association said he was the youngest pirate it had caught. *Because of his age, no action would be taken.*



A black man is killed for the colour of his skin. But here justice got done



ANDREW MARSHALL
IN JASPER

JASPER IS not Eltham, and racism in the United States is a beast born out of a different womb than racism in Britain.

But the sentencing to death in Texas this week of John William King for the murder of James Byrd, and the release of the report into Stephen Lawrence's murder in a south-east London street have focused minds on either side of the Atlantic on the racial poison that still lurks below the surface in each society.

The one common factor in the murders is that Byrd and Lawrence were killed for the same, single reason. Both were black. Eltham's attempts to heal the wounds of the past six years are hopefully – albeit falteringly – now beginning. Jasper, too, is having to deal with the infamy that a ghastly murder has visited on it.

Ray Parton did a good thing. He put on his gloves one day in January, went out and tore down a barrier that separated the black and white community in the town where he lives. It was a good deed, but doubtless Ray would have got a lot less attention than he did – front page news in the *Houston Morning News*, a few seconds on network television – if things had not been as they were.

The barrier he was removing was in the cemetery, between the graves of town residents who remained segregated even in death

We are sitting in June Bug's Club and Grill, one of the few drinking holes in a town that is dry, where there are more churches than fast food stores (and there are a dozen of so of them) for 8,000 people.

With the Eagles playing in the background, the squeals and roars of a pool game in full session in the next room and shotguns above the bar, it would be easy to categorise this as a redneck town, where country is as country does. But that would be wrong, and the past year has shown it.

"We don't want this Klan crap," says Mr Parton, with an obviously heartfelt sense of indignation. "This ain't a hate community. This is a retirement community."

James Byrd was dragged to death behind a pick-up truck on a steamy hot night last summer. His killers wanted to use the incident to establish a local branch of a far-right group. For part of the journey, they dragged his body through a black neighbourhood. God knows what the residents heard, or if they realised what was hurtling down the road behind the truck.

But this is the South, and memories go back some. Many will remember when a lynching was a common event. East Texas still has some pockets of dense racism, towns such as Vidor, where an important Klan group is based, and where a black face is as unfamiliar as a fur coat in midsummer. For Jasper, after the death of James Byrd came the media, and with them the Klan, demonstrating in the pretty court square, then the Texas Rangers to keep order, and the New Black Panthers, out to make their point, and the Reverend Jesse Jackson, and basketball player Dennis Rodman, who paid for the Byrd funeral, and then the media again, for the trial of John William King, one of three defendants.

For the town, it was a disaster: not just because any murder this vile is a catastrophe, nor because of its racially inflammatory nature. Jasper cares deeply what people think about it beyond the pine woods.

Historically this is a lumber town, set in the dense pine forests of this corner of the South and established around the rail line after the loggers stopped using the river to float timber down to the coast. But the 18-wheeler trucks that roar up and down between the woods and the paper and pulp factories of Lufkin and Beaumont are no longer the most important driving force in the local economy.

The greatest assets Jasper has are the Sam Rayburn lake up the road, one of the best bass fishing lakes in America, and the tourists who come to fish it. Last year's heatwave took its toll on the lake, and the killing threatened to dry up the flow of visitors. And what people said, from the beginning, was: this isn't us, and we want people to know it.

They did things right in Jasper, from the very beginning. It was already a mixed community, in the sense that it is about half-black, half-white, with a white sheriff, the rock-solid Billy Rowles, and a black mayor, the dignified R C Horn. The town began a sometimes painful dialogue about race, which much of the white population did not think was an issue, but the black population knew was. What about the fence that separated black and white in the cemetery, they pointed out?

Ray Parton went out there last month and helped to tear down the fence, a wrought-iron affair about three feet off the ground that had been there as long as anyone can remember. The legacy of race in Jasper, as everywhere else in the South, is a deadweight, as much to do with unexamined assumptions as deliberate decisions. "It'd been there since the civil war, or before," said Mr Parton. "I mean, that just don't comprehend."

A killing such as that of James Byrd or Stephen Lawrence is not just about taking a life: it is about negating a life, erasing it. A lynching is, has always been, about power.

Emory University in Georgia keeps a collection of lynching memorabilia, shocking because of its very banality. In each picture you can see the body, swinging in the wind or burning, and the crowds of men, women, children, in their Sunday finery, smiling, not with bloodlust but like partygoers on bonfire night.

One image is burnt into my mind, an old shot of the main street in the tiny town of Cairo, Illinois – a northern state – with a ceremonial arch, and the notation in scratchy handwriting: "Where they hung the coon". It is like indicating your room on a hotel postcard with a cross; the life that was taken is of no more import, counted for nothing in the first place. The event itself is what mattered, and needs no more explanation.

Jasper has tried to atone for that event. It put Mr King on trial, found him guilty, and sentenced him to death. But beyond that, it sought to use the killing not to entrench racial barriers as King and his drunken friends hoped but to change things for the better, just a little. It will never be a liberal's paradise – there are no black faces in June Bug's, and there aren't most nights – but then nowhere in the US is.

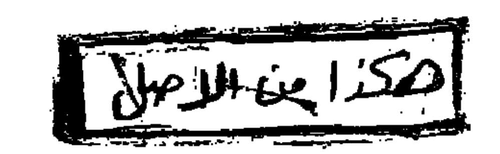
Race is a time bomb in America. Washington, the capital, is divided down the middle between white and black, with 14th Street the notional border.

New York is more mixed, but a white face north of 96th Street is still a rarity. The best the country has come up with so far is a form of "peaceful co-existence." In Jasper, at least the bodies rest together now, even if they were apart in life.

Ian Jack is on holiday



The 1982 pick-up truck that racists drove, dragging James Byrd, chained by his ankles, to his death last June on a bumpy, winding country road in Jasper, Texas



Blair hives off Cornwall while embracing the euro

THE WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

MICHAEL BROWN

THE PRIME MINISTER took the first risk of his premiership by moving the debate on joining the euro "up a gear".

For Mr Blair nothing in Government policy has officially changed, but the publication of the national changeover plan provides further evidence that he is banking on the "inevitability" argument to assist his now open desire to embrace the single currency.

Focus groups have presumably told him that Europe is not an issue on the doorstep and will not inhibit his prospects at the next general election.

Mr Blair's action opens clear water between himself and William Hague and is calculated to reinforce the split within the Conservative Party. "Operation Hoover", the Labour offensive to win over Tory grandees to its various projects, will now gather pace. Ken Clarke, Michael Heseltine and Sir Edward Heath have every incentive to put the euro ahead of their support for Mr Hague.

If Mr Blair's strategy can further divide the Tories he believes he will negate the risk of losing some support in the polls. But if there are signs that public opinion cannot be moved in favour of the euro he will simply delay a referendum until he is certain he can win.

◆

The reputation for surefootedness of the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, took a severe knock with the publication of the Stephen Lawrence report. The bungled attempt to injunct the press against the backcloth of deliberate selective leaking to a journalist by someone in the Home Office was compounded by the subsequent retraction, after formal publication, of the appendix listing names of police informants.

Calls for Mr Straw's resignation were unjustified but the way in which the Home Office withdrew the offending appendices without volunteering an immediate statement to Parliament gave Roger Gale (C, Thanet North) an opportunity to make political capital against Mr Straw during a point of order.

This eventually led to a tetchy, defensive "not me guv" attitude from the junior minister, Paul Boateng, when he was dragged kicking and screaming to the House yesterday.

No one can deny that, but for Mr Straw, there would have been no inquiry at all. There had been years of resistance from his Tory predecessor, Michael Howard. But to dump the blame on Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, the inquiry chairman, was a tad disingenuous.

All these alarms and excursions threatened to divert attention from the main conclusions of the report. Mr Boateng inflamed an already delicate situation when he described the Home Office as no more than "printer and publisher" of the report.

Mr Straw must be praying that he is not let down by any further departmental incompetence and will be anxious that the leak inquiry does not finger any of his junior ministers. If it does, a head will roll.

◆



Tony Blair may have come out for the euro but still holds all the aces in deciding on a date for a referendum

Tony Lloyd, the junior Foreign Office minister with day-to-day responsibility for Sierra Leone, was at the centre of the latest row between ministers and the Foreign Affairs Select Committee.

Tories on the committee accused him of dishonest, hair-splitting written answers worthy of Bill Clinton when detailing his first sight of its report. This was leaked to him in advance by Ernie Ross (Lab, Dundee West) who resigned from the committee last week. The relationships between minister and officials, and ministers and select committee, are now at breaking point.

For consecutive weeks Mr Cook and his chief fall guy, the Permanent Secretary Sir John Kerr, have been listed to appear together before the committee. Both hearings were mysteriously cancelled. The Tories have now taken up the cudgel and called an opposition debate on the issue next Tuesday.

◆

The publication of the latest register of members' interests yields different attitudes towards the goodies they are offered during visits abroad.

Nine MPs were guests of the Gulf Centre for Strategic Studies, which took them to Bahrain last October. Of these, five declared watches given by the Amir of Bahrain, two of whom donated the gifts to charities. Interest surrounds the remaining four: – Ashok Kumar (Lab, Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland), Andrew Love (Lab, Edmonton), Ken Purchase (Lab, Wolverhampton North East) and Claire Ward (Lab, Watford) who made no declarations of the expensive jewellery. Did they offend the Amir so that he decided not to favour them? Did they say "no thanks"? Or perhaps they have simply had a lapse of memory. In the past the Amir's gift watches (Baum and Mercier) have been valued well in excess of £1,000.

The most unusual gifts received were a Penny Black stamp from the Electricity Association to Labour's Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley) and a BBC teaspoon "bent and signed by Uri Geller" to Ann Widdecombe (Con, Maidstone).

Peter Mandelson finally declared his home loan. But Commons rules only appear to require the registration of the act of borrowing. There was no mention of the loan under Geoffrey Robinson's entry.

◆

Andrew George (Lib Dem, St Ives) has been driven crazy by the inability of the Government to decide which department of state is responsible for answering his concerns about the future of the Cornish language.

Mr George has been leading the campaign to ensure that Cornish is regarded as an officially recognised language.

So far the matter has been considered successively by the Department for Education and Employment; the Home Office; the Department for Culture, Media and Sport; the Department of the Environment, Transport and The Regions; and the Welsh Office.

Mr George finally wrote to the Cabinet Office to determine responsibility before launching an adjournment debate on the issue. But he was amazed to see Joyce Quin preparing to answer the debate. Ms Quin is a Minister of State at the Foreign Office. At a stroke Mr George appears to have struck a blow for Cornish independence, to the chagrin of Scottish and Welsh nationalists.

MPs back work ban on abuse suspects

BY SARAH SCHAEFER
Political Reporter

MPs BACKED a Bill yesterday to ban convicted and even suspected paedophiles for life from working with children – despite serious misgivings over civil liberties.

The Protection of Children private member's Bill, sponsored by Debra Shipley, the Labour MP for Stourbridge, would ban all childcare organisations from employing anyone on a national register drawn up by the Government, and require employers to submit the names of those who have harmed children or put them at risk.

This will enable the Government's proposed Criminal Records Bureau to operate a "one-stop shop" so concerned childcare organisations can make speedy checks on volunteers as well as employees.

Several Labour backbenchers fear innocent people could end up on the list and they plan to table amendments once the Bill reaches its committee stage.

Ms Shipley said the legislation would give individuals a right of appeal against inclusion. "As things now stand people do not know if they are kept on the lists kept by certain government departments," she said. "They have no right to appeal and cannot amend the entry."

John Hutton, a Health minister, said the Bill would bring protection to the innocent, and indicated that ministers wanted criminal sanctions for organisations that fail to comply with the vetting system.

Ms Shipley told MPs: "No organisation is free from potential abusers and it is only right and proper that parents can expect organisations, in whom they have put their trust, to vet their workers, paid or unpaid."

James Paice, the Tory MP for Cambridgeshire South East, cautioned against "malicious reporting" of people to the list and urged rigorous checks because suspects would be considered "guilty until proven innocent".

Jackie Ballard, the Liberal Democrat MP for Taunton, said the ability to check the lists needed to be extended to every statutory employer.

"If that does not happen, I can see that those people on the list may see the best hope of going undetected is to work for a private individual, as a nanny, because that individual would not have access to the list."

The Bill was given an unopposed second reading and stands a good chance of becoming law, having the support of the Department for Education and Employment, the Home Office and the Department of Health.

■ A pensioner charged with sex offences against children and adults dating back to 1972 years was remanded in custody by a magistrates' court at Reading, Berkshire, yesterday.

Sidney Cooke, 71, is charged with 14 assaults, including four rapes, involving eight people – men, women and children – aged between 11 and 23.

Cooke, gaunt and with a grey, straggly beard, gave only his name and date of birth.

His lawyer, Graeme Hydari, made no application for bail. Cook is next due to appear in court on March 26.

SNP gets shirty over kilts claim

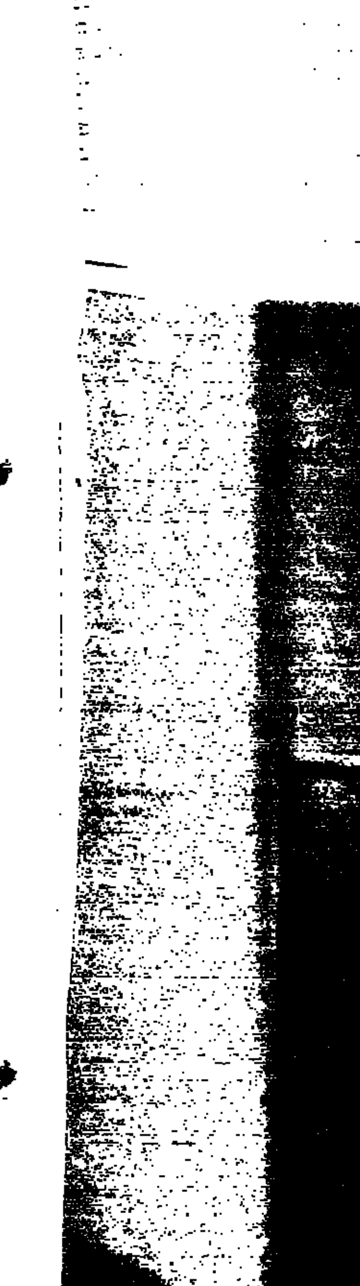
BY NEIL RAFFERTY

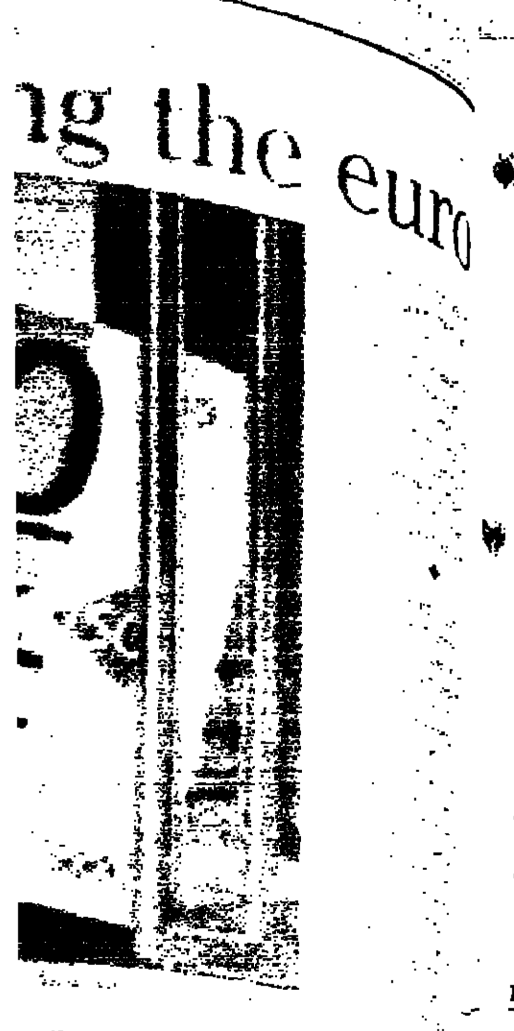
THE SCOTTISH National Party denied yesterday that it had barred members from wearing the kilt.

Reports claimed SNP spin-doctors had ordered leading party figures not to wear the traditional Scottish dress at a business dinner last week. The SNP, which uses the slogan "Scotland's Party", wanted to promote a more modern image instead of the so-called Braveheart style, it was claimed.

A party spokeswoman said: "It is complete nonsense. We do not tell people what to wear." The SNP leader, Alex Salmond, did wear tartan trousers to the fundraising event, but the spokeswoman pointed out: "Alex does not tend to wear the kilt anyway." And she added: "We have got candidates who will dress in everything from jeans to business suits to kilts."







Catfight on the catwalk and Gucci is losing

By Darius Sanai





Mr Arnault's (left) LVMH group is locked in battle with Gucci, of which Mr De Sole is chairman, for a seat on its board *David Rose*

IF YOU close your eyes, Domenico De Sole sounds like the softly spoken Don in a De Niro movie. "So let them sue," he says, his quiet tones rising in a whispered crescendo. "I have nothing to fear. They will lose."

Mr De Sole, whose accent is suspended halfway between Lazio and the Lower East Side, is chairman of Gucci. He is small and dapper, with smiling eyes, a ferret-like quickness, and he speaks with considerable determination.

He will need it. Mr De Sole spent most of London Fashion Week away from the hospitality tents, fighting a battle from his Mayfair office against Bernard Arnault, chairman of the French luxury goods giant LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, who is engaged in an intricate legal battle with the small Florentine luxury house.

The latest swipe in a vicious catfight that ranges one corner of Harvey Nichols against a large segment of Bond Street and Fortnum and Mason's wine department came on Thursday, when Mr Arnault announced he was taking Mr De Sole to court. The result of the case in Amsterdam, where Gucci's shares trade, could be the end of one of the century's more remarkable fashion revivals.

Mr De Sole hinted that he might retire if his rival wins. A close friend said Mr De Sole, who with his protege, the brilliant Texan designer Tom Ford, has transformed Gucci from a lounge-lizard has-been to the ultimate in late-90s chic, "would definitely consider his position".

Mr Ford, who is ironically a friend of Mr Arnault, is reported not to be happy with the developments, and if he leaves with Mr De Sole, there will effectively be no Gucci left.

The spat began last week when Mr De Sole incurred the fury of Mr Arnault by issuing 20 million new shares to his employees after the French company had secretly bought a similar amount itself and demanded a seat on the board.

Finding its stake diluted and emitting cries of "not fair", LVMH issued a lawsuit against Gucci, claiming the tactic was illegal. One of Mr Arnault's senior advisers said it was like "creating imaginary voters to win an election". He added that some other Gucci shareholders could also sue Mr De Sole.

In his only face-to-face interview with the British press this week, Mr De Sole told *The Independent* why he is using such extreme tactics.

"LVMH are suing me, but the other shareholders? Pah! Why would they?" he said.

"The only shareholder who wants to sue me is Mr Arnault. Now, I'm a lawyer, and you can sue anyone for anything. The question is whether you win. And I'll do my very best to stand up to LVMH."

His adversary, Mr Arnault, is described by some as "the Rupert Murdoch of the luxury industry". He collects companies like his customers collect labels. Under his stewardship his company has acquired Louis Vuitton, Christian Dior, Givenchy, Christian Lacroix, Kenzo, Moët et Chandon, Dom Pérignon, Veuve Cliquot and Krug.

Not all the companies he now controls wanted to be controlled by him, and he reportedly has his eyes on Armani and Prada as well as Gucci.

The Frenchman's supporters say he has democratised the fashion and luxury goods industry to the extent that his labels, which were once available only to the chosen few, are now accessible to the middle classes. To criticism that he only cares about the bottom-line, Mr Arnault's supporters reply, in the style of Mr Murdoch, that fashion is a business.

"I think Domenico De Sole is motivated in large part by what he thinks is in it for him if he forces us out or forces us to make a full takeover bid," a senior LVMH official said.

Mr De Sole is listening attentively to questions in his minimal, black-and-white Mayfair office. The chairman looks very un-Gucci, conservatively dressed in one of Tom Ford's charcoal suits, a blue shirt and a red-patterned tie.

I ask him, jovially, whether in issuing the extra shares he wasn't just being a cheat. There is a silence. "A cheat?" he says, spitting out the "t". "About what? I am just protecting my shareholders. LVMH must make a proper bid, not a creeping acquisition which we and all the shareholders will lose out on."

By all accounts Mr Arnault sees his next acquisition as his next challenge. What about Mr De Sole? "My next challenge? A happy retirement," he smiles.

As William Nygren, the fund manager with the Chicago-based Oakmark Select Fund, which holds a significant Gucci stake, said yesterday, Mr De Sole and Mr Ford are a brilliant team, just like a perfect sports partnership. If one goes, nobody knows what will happen.

LVMH
THE BRANDS

(All acquired by Bernard Arnault)

Christian Dior
Givenchy
Christian Lacroix
Louis Vuitton
Kenzo
Guerlain
Celine
Moet & Chandon
Veuve Cliquot
Dom Perignon
Champagne Krug
Chateau D'Yquem
Hennessy
Duty Free Shops (Far East)
Le Bon Marche (Paris)
Sephora Cosmetics

Balloon pair close to record

By Andrew Buncombe

WHAT DO you do when you are travelling in a balloon at 24,000ft? Shiver, apparently.

AT 6am today, having passed over Bombay, Colin Prescot and Andy Elson should have broken the world balloon endurance record. Their one problem is that they are rather cold.

A heating pump on board the Cable and Wireless balloon has broken and with outside temperatures falling to minus 30C, the two men have been forced to put on the special cold-weather clothing, suitable for Arctic conditions, they were carrying in case of an emergency landing in inhospitable surroundings.

"Let's just say they are rather uncomfortable," a spokeswoman said yesterday.

"They do have the correct clothing but I still think they are rather cold. I know that there is ice on the inside of the observation window."

Mr Elson, 45, and Mr Prescot, 48, spent the best part of yesterday travelling at 50mph over the Arabian Sea, with unpredictable weather patterns requiring their full attention and not allowing them time to repair the pump.

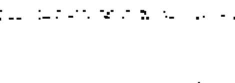
The pair set off from Spain on 17 February and are attempting to circumnavigate the globe. Because they do not have permission from the Peking government they are being forced to go around China.

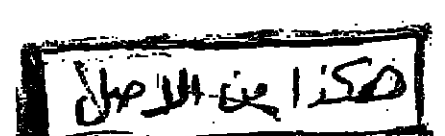
Their course will take them across south-east Asia before they head north to try to catch the Gulf Stream that they hope will carry them across the Pacific at up to 160mph. They have supplies for 25 days.

To break the current endurance record, set last year by Mr Elson himself on board the Breitling Orbiter 2, the pair need to add 1 per cent to the nine days, 17 hours and 55 minutes achieved then.









Celts were 'really just a Scotch myth'

BY KATE WATSON-SMYTH

THE CELTS are thought of as a romantic people, hard-drinking, free-spirited and proud. But according to a respected academic, the Celts of the British Isles may never have existed.

A leading professor from the British Museum in London is claiming in a new book that, far from maintaining an unbroken line of descent since prehistoric times, Britain's Celts are a recent invention dating back no more than 300 years.

Professor Simon James, an Englishman, argues that there is no historical or archeological evidence for an ancient nation of Celts in Britain and that the so-called Celtic groups were scattered people with little in common with each other.

The Iron Age and Roman archaeologist said the term Celtic came to be used in Britain only in the 18th century when a book was published by Edward Lhwyd, a language specialist, pointing out or the first time that Welsh, Irish, Scottish, Manx and Cornish were very similar to each other and to the Breton language spoken in France.

"Before that time people just referred to themselves as Irish, Scottish, Welsh and Cornish but they did not see themselves as being linked," he said.

"Lhwyd called the group Celtic because the term had already been used on the continent to refer to the ancient Gauls of France.



Mel Gibson and Scots spear carriers in 'Braveheart'

"The idea of Celticness developed from there. Some people in Wales started to call themselves Celts and ancient monuments, which had hitherto been called 'druidic', came to be known as Celtic as well. Gradually, but within about 20 years, people had begun to identify with this as a concept."

His views, to be published in a forthcoming book, *The Atlantic Celts, Ancient People or Modern Invention?* have so outraged some people that he has been accused of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Alex Woolf, a lecturer in Celtic and Scottish history at Edinburgh University, said it was a "fatuous" argument and added that it was "blindingly obvious" that the different Celtic languages were all similar and belonged to the same ethnic group.

"It's a question of what's in a name," he said. "People in northern Italy and France referred to themselves as Celts to distinguish [their tribes] from the Greeks and Romans but in Britain there were only Celts so people had no need to label themselves.

"They may not have used the term in Britain but they had many things in common with the Celts on the Continent - the same gods, the same names. We know that Milan in Italy and Whitchurch, in Shropshire, were both called Mediolanum by the Celts. The people living there were of the same race."

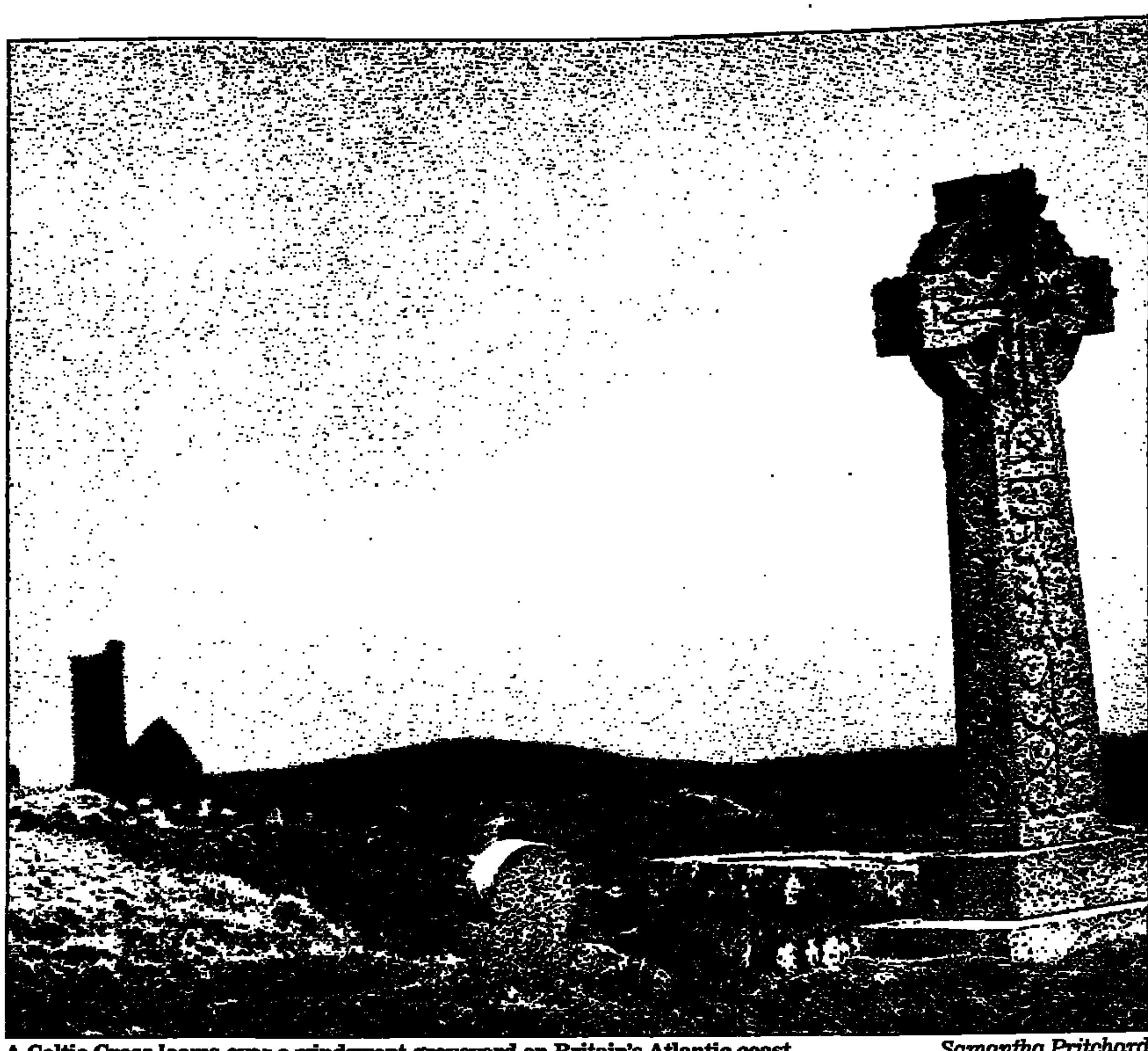
Professor James said he was aware that his argument had caused upset. "People do have very strong emotional attachment to this idea. The idea of Celts is rooted in deep antiquity and they get very upset when you tell them that it's a modern invention."

Meanwhile, Alex Salmond, the leader of the Scottish National Party, said yesterday the English had their own identity crisis that needed sorting out as there was a confusion between Britishness and Englishness. The notion of Britishness, he said, had been claimed by thugs and racists, while Englishness was an "aristocratic, almost medieval concept.

"The rediscovering of the English identity – and claiming it as a forward-looking, benign force, instead of the confusion which is manifest in England – would be a very positive thing both for Europe and Scotland and for the rest of the world."

Rhodri Morgan, the Labour MP for Cardiff West, said he was "Celtic and proud of it" and Professor James' argument was "cobblers. The Celts were here before the Anglo Saxons and it's just English jealousy," he said.

"We were civilised first and in fact the earliest poem ever to be composed in a post-Classical Language was in Welsh. There is no question that the Celts existed and were here when Julius Caesar invaded. It's just modern Anglo-Saxon propaganda."



A Celtic Cross looms over a windswept graveyard on Britain's Atlantic coast *Samantha Pritchard*

Vivisection firebomber loses appeal

BY IAN BURRELL
Home Affairs Correspondent

THE JAILED animal rights activist and hunger striker, Barry Horne, lost his appeal yesterday against his conviction and 18-year sentence for carrying out a firebombing campaign.

Horne, who undertook a 68-day hunger strike last year in a protest designed to bring an end to vivisection, is serving what is believed to be the longest sentence given for animal rights offences.

The former dustman was convicted at Bristol Crown Court in December 1997 of charges of arson and attempted arson after causing millions of pounds in damage to shops on the Isle of Wight in 1994.

Yesterday, Lord Justice Tuckey, Mrs Justice Smith and Mr Justice Gray, sitting in the Court of Appeal in London, rejected his claim that his conviction was "unsafe" and that his sentence was too long.

Horne, 46, from Northampton, was present in the dock yesterday, flanked by four security officers, to hear the court rule against him.

The court was packed with his supporters, who earlier handed out leaflets declaring Horne's "innocence" in the Isle of Wight arson attacks.

After Lord Justice Tuckey gave the ruling of the court, some people in the public gallery stamped their feet and there were shouts of "It's disgusting", and "Shame on British justice."

Horne had claimed in his appeal that the judge at his trial, Judge Simon Darwall-Smith, had given a misdirection to the jury during his summing-up, thus rendering the conviction "unsafe".

Lord Justice Tuckey said that although the judge had made an "error" during his summing-up, it did not render the conviction unsafe. He said with hindsight, the judge should have said nothing about possible alternative "candidates" for the Isle of Wight fire bomb attacks, but this should be seen in the context of the standard of proof required.

"We can see no reason for thinking that the sentence in this case was obviously too long. It seems to us that although it was a long sentence, it was a sentence which was the appropriate sentence for these very serious offences."

The Crown contested Horne's appeal, submitting that the evidence against him was "overwhelming".

Sentencing Horne, the trial judge had told him: "This was urban terrorism for a particular cause and objective. You put communities in terror. But I do accept that you did not intend an attack on human life."

During his trial, he had denied the Isle of Wight offences, but admitted two offences of attempted arson relating to the placing of timed incendiary devices in two stores in Bristol in July 1996.

Horne went on a hunger strike in an attempt to force the Government to set up a royal commission into vivisection.

Toy museum is victim of property deal

BY DAVID LISTER
Arts News Editor

TWO EXHIBITS in the London Toy Museum tend to catch the eye immediately. One is an early Paddington Bear, made by Shirley Clarkson, an art teacher from Doncaster, for her young son Jeremy, who now presents *Top Gear*.



The other is a clockwork pig given to the future prime minister Stanley Baldwin, inscribed: "For a good boy, love from Mummy and Daddy". But their celebrated provenance will not save these two childhood toys, nor the other 7,000 exhibits, among them television favourites including the first Womble and the original Bagpuss.

Children enjoying a day out at the London Toy Museum in Bayswater. It will be open for the last time this weekend as its Japanese owners have decided to sell the site for redevelopment *Mark Chilvers*

The museum, which attracts 120,000 visitors a year, will be closed tomorrow by its Japanese owners and its collection sold off by Sotheby's in July for an estimated £3m.

The star item in the sale will be the museum's pride and joy, a "working" coal mine four metres long and three metres high, complete with pulleys and even little leather men eating their sandwiches. The model, which includes 200 moving figures, takes up an entire room. It was made by a Welsh miner called William Phelps, who began his project in 1902 and finished it 20 years later.

The ships and boats gallery is full of tin-plate toys – the rarest are the seagoing kind because poor-fitting propeller shafts usually sank them. And there is the tin-plate clockwork dog that does doggy paddle, kept afloat by its cork lining. In the garden, there are model steam engines to give children rides at weekends.

The museum was founded in 1982 by two collectors, Alan and Nerissa Levy. Seven years on, it was bought for £4m by the Fujita Corporation, the Japanese firm run by Kazuaki Fujita, a toy collector who died in 1995.

The firm spent £5.5m on refurbishment but has now decided it can no longer afford to maintain the museum. Its buildings – two town houses in Bayswater, west London – will be redeveloped into flats, the toys will be sold and the 30 employees made redundant.

Glenn Sharman, museum manager, said: "We have heard rumours about 11th-hour rescue offers, but the likelihood is that we will close this weekend. It's a terrible shame. It's not only a wonderful collection of toys, but every day we run educational projects for 90 schoolchildren on Victorian toys."

Among the pupils who have been seen studying and enjoying the toys are Princes William and Harry, and the children of the actors Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman.

Michael Bond, author of the Paddington Bear books, is one of those unhappy about the sale. "It is a delightful collection of all sorts," he says. "Paddington would be at home there. But sadly he wouldn't be able to buy it for that price."

Loyd Grossman, the television presenter and a member of the Museum and Galleries Commission, is also concerned. He says: "I like the museum because my kids love it. But it is not registered with the commission, so the collection can be dispersed or taken into private ownership and hidden."

Allen Levy says the London Toy Museum's collection sets it apart from other, more whimsical, collections in the capital's other toy museums, the Victoria and Albert Collection at Bethnal Green and Pollock's Toy Museum in central London. "We were the heavy metal – boats, trains and cars. They had more dolls and dolls' houses," he says. There is, though, a spectacular dolls' house at Bayswater made 10 years ago by a prison inmate called Paul Woods, who spent 5,000 hours on the intricate woodwork of his Palladian creation.

Mr Levy has his own unarguable logic for the museum to continue. "More people have played with toy trains and cars than have looked at a Rembrandt," he says.

Channel 4 fined over faked film

BY RHYS WILLIAMS

CHANNEL 4 was fined yesterday for the first time in its broadcasting history after admitting that scenes in a documentary about rent boys were faked.

The Independent Television Commission imposed a £150,000 penalty on the network for *Too Much Too Young: Chickens*, which contained sequences in which the film-makers posed as clients picking up rent boys.

When the deception was confirmed three weeks ago, Channel 4 made a public admission and blamed the film's independent producer, Mary Devine. Channel 4 said she would never work for the network again, and overhauled its programme-making guidelines.

It was this swift and decisive action, the commission said yesterday, that in part spared Channel 4 the sort of sanction imposed on Carlton Television for the faked drugs documentary *The Connection*. The latter had to pay £2m after it was revealed that large sections of its award-winning film about an alleged new trafficking route between Colombia and London had been fabricated.

"The commission took into account that Channel 4 has responded firmly and appropriately when the full scale of the problem became known," the ITC said in a statement. "Although the breaches were serious and viewers were deceived, the incidents amounted to under three minutes of the half-hour programme. The rent boys were genuine and most of the film involved their reflections of life. The breaches and the extent of deception viewers were therefore not comparable with those in *The Connection* and the financial penalty reflects this."

However, Michael Jackson, Channel 4's chief executive, said he was disappointed by the fine. "The implication is that we failed in our duty to our audience, but Channel 4 is certain it did everything in its power, editorially and legally, to ensure the authenticity of this programme. Our procedures are robust ... but no procedures are proof against deliberate and organised deception."

Channel 4 is still in dispute with Nottingham City Council over a forthcoming programme called *Staying Lost*, a documentary about children in council care. The council is attempting to block the programme because it claims producers encouraged a young girl to pretend to be a prostitute and that they paid children to appear in the film.

Smokers drop damages action

BY MIKE TAYLOR AND JAN COLLEY

A HIGH COURT damages action by a group of lung cancer sufferers was abandoned yesterday after most of the claimants decided to call a halt to the case.

The decision effectively brings to an end tobacco-related litigation in the UK.

Two firms of solicitors – Leigh Day and Co and Irwin Mitchell – who had taken on claims by 53 sufferers on a "no win, no fee" basis, are left with a costs bill running into millions of pounds.

Mr Justice Wright, sitting in London, was told that 46 of the claimants had signed an agreement withdrawing their actions and ending their conditional fee agreements with their solicitors. The other seven were given until 16 April to indicate whether they want to continue.

Yesterday's announcement follows a judgment on 9 February in which Mr Justice Wright decided not to exercise his discretion to allow the action against Gallaher and Imperial Tobacco to continue after it was brought outside the legal time limit. The plaintiffs in eight test cases had all lodged their claims more than three years after being diagnosed with lung cancer.

Had they been successful, the application would have paved the way for a larger group of lung cancer sufferers to sue the two firms.

The lung cancer victims had claimed that they suffered injury because all the cigarettes with which they were supplied between the 1950s and 1970s contained far more tar than was reasonably safe or appropriate.

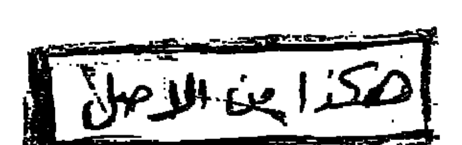
Robert Owen QC, for the claimants, told the judge that his earlier ruling had "caused the plaintiffs and their legal advisers to take stock of the viability of this litigation".

Martyn Day of Leigh, Day and Co later said that his firm faces a bill for costs of £2.5m.









Britain's worst college: bad management, weird cults and a £5.7m debt


Some of the 55,000 students at Bilston Community College who, inspectors say, receive inadequate teaching and support *Mike Scott*

By Ben Russell
Education Correspondent

AN INQUIRY has been ordered into the future of one of Britain's fastest growing colleges after it received the worst report given by government inspectors.

The report released yesterday on Bilston Community College, in Wolverhampton, is unprecedented in its criticism. Management, governors, quality controls and support for students were all given the worst possible gradings.

The college, which has been criticised in the past for activities ranging from a partnership with a Christian group advocating exorcism to dealings in Russian "champagne", has debts totalling £5.7m and is surviving on bank overdrafts and advance payments from funding officials. The Further Education Funding Council said it was sending in an inquiry team of experts – effectively a "hit squad" – to decide the future of the college. The team's report is due by Easter.

The inspectors' report comes just weeks after the Government announced a crackdown on failing colleges.

Last month, George Mudie, the Education minister, said colleges that did not improve could be closed or their governors sacked.

Mr Mudie said yesterday: "We have made it absolutely clear that we will not tolerate poor performance by colleges."

Inspectors found "no key strengths" in Bilston College's management, governance, quality assurance and support for students. Their report said that poor management had led to a "significant decline" in educational standards. "Much of the teaching is weak and there is poor student retention and achievement in many areas."

It called for the college to tackle "inadequate support for students; weak teaching; poor attendance and low retention; low achievements; inaccurate data on students' performance and inadequate management of the curriculum."

The college expanded from 11,000 students in 1994 to 55,000 in 1997 through a series of courses run under franchise across the country. Managers ploughed ahead with expansion plans despite a £3.5m cut imposed two years ago.

Bilston also set up a web of nine companies and another seven joint ventures, including two job agencies, an import-export business, a film-making company, a garden centre and a publishing house – all part of an ambitious programme to regenerate the local economy. All the ventures are now being wound up. It also entered into an arrangement with some Russian businessmen who had bought quantities of Russian "champagne" and wanted Bilston to "test the market".

Alan Birks, who was brought in as the acting principal in November to turn the college around, said it had "gone off the rails". But he insisted that the college, which now has only 12,000 students, could be saved. He said: "We're going to give priority to local people, which fits in with the Government's agenda. We are going to invest in our premises and create local centres of excellence. We want to try to create a first-class learning experience."

Mr Birks said that he had already started work to bring the college's deficit under control. Some 130 managers have already left the college.

Paul Mackney, general secretary of the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education, said: "It's all a case of the emperor's new clothes. People were so caught up with the hype about expansion that they did not see the reality. This was a college which had some brilliant ideas but got carried away with them."

Hague's 'super A-level' plan attacked as elitist

By Judith Judd
Education Editor

A-LEVELS should be strengthened by a new A* grade to prevent the dilution of standards threatened by government plans to reform the exam, the Conservative Party leader, William Hague, said yesterday.

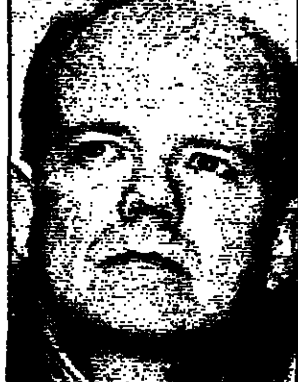
However, the Tory leader's proposal was immediately attacked by secondary heads who branded it élitist and outdated as the dispute about A-levels gathered pace.

Mr Hague's new grade would go to the top 2.5 per cent of candidates. He said it would help employers and universities to select high-flyers.

The controversial A* at GCSE was introduced by the previous government because of fears that the brightest pupils were not being stretched.

In a speech at Folkestone School for Girls, in Kent, Mr Hague said: "We believe that A-levels should be maintained as the gold standard in education and should be protected and strengthened. The new grade would ensure rigorous academic standards and spur young people on to the highest levels of achievement."

John Dunford, general secretary of the Secondary Heads Association, said: "This would make A-level even more élitist. We are looking for post-16 qualifications which will serve the whole population and not a small minority."


William Hague: Grade will help to select high flyers

Under the Government's plans for A-level reform, from September next year pupils will be able to take five subjects in the first year of an A-level course to gain a new AS qualification. They will then decide whether to continue with three A-levels or carry on with more subjects.

The new courses will be in six modules chunks with exams that can be taken throughout the two years and mixed with vocational qualifications.

The National Association of Head Teachers warned the Government yesterday that its plans to reform A-level will fail. It wants a compulsory baccalaureate-style exam combining arts and sciences.

Under government plans pupils will be allowed to choose whether they take more subjects and universities will be free to keep their existing entrance requirements.

David Hart, the association's general secretary, told a conference yesterday that schools would be slow to take up new AS exams designed to broaden the sixth form curriculum.

He predicted that many universities would continue to select pupils on the basis of three A-levels and ignore the new exams.

Mr Hart accused the Government of dithering. "The danger is that lack of government enthusiasm will lead to nothing like the broadening necessary. This would be a tragedy, bearing in mind that the current system serves only a minority and provides little, if anything, by way of relevant programmes of study for the majority."

Independent school heads have already voiced fears that the new arrangements will dilute the "gold standard" of A-level and that universities will take no account of the new AS.

But Mr Dunford welcomed the changes. "The vast majority of schools will do AS levels though I think most will choose to offer four rather than five because of problems with resourcing and timetabling."

He suggested that universities might decide to make offers of places on the basis of pupils' AS results instead of relying on predicted grades.

There will also be new voluntary business skills tests to ensure that pupils leave school able to read spreadsheets, write reports and cope with maths, and tests in communications, computer technology and numeracy.

Nissan gives new cars to young criminals

By Philip Thornton
Transport Correspondent

A LEADING car company is giving new models to persistent young thieves in an attempt to discover the tricks of their trade.

Nissan, the Japanese manufacturer, is supplying the cars to selected prisons and young offenders' institutions as part of a prison-education course.

The inmates will be asked to tell all about how they steal cars – which models they go for and at what time of day, how long thefts take and whether locks and alarms are a deterrent.


Nissans will be used to crack car criminals' secrets

Nissan said a pilot scheme at Durham jail found the re-offending rate for those who took part was only 30 per cent after 12 months, compared with 80 per cent for all offenders.

A Nissan spokesman said yesterday: "It takes the knowledge and fascination which first-time offenders have for cars and reorientates it in a more positive direction. It stops them from stealing cars by getting them interested in car maintenance and associating cars with the consequence of stealing them in terms of harm to other people and themselves."

He said the course deglamorised car theft by debunking "street" myths about the crime and explaining the possible fatal consequences of "joyriding" and police chases. "We know that this programme is going to reduce car crime, but perhaps it will also help to reduce the huge waste of these young people's lives who keep getting locked away."

At the end of the course the offenders are given an accreditation from the Open College, which shows they have learnt about the implication of their criminal past.

The spokesman said two of the prisons being considered included Glenpava in Leicestershire and Rochester in Kent. Both are large jails with big young-offender populations.

Nissan is providing car-maintenance equipment, car models and training for prison officers to give the 30-hour courses. The scheme will begin in spring or summer, although Nissan said it was too early to say which prisons would be selected. The spokesman said the scheme would apply only to first-time offenders, as the programme would be less effective for recidivists.

The United Kingdom is Europe's capital of car crime, with a vehicle stolen every minute. In 1997 there were 3.48 million thefts or attempted thefts of or from vehicles, according to the British Crime Survey.

Lions saved from death

By Chris Hamilton

A PAIR of lions rejected by their fellow animals in a safari park were saved from being put down yesterday after a home was found for them at the last minute.

Brothers Bruno and Bantu had to be moved after they were turned into outcasts by the dominant males at Woburn Safari Park in Bedfordshire.

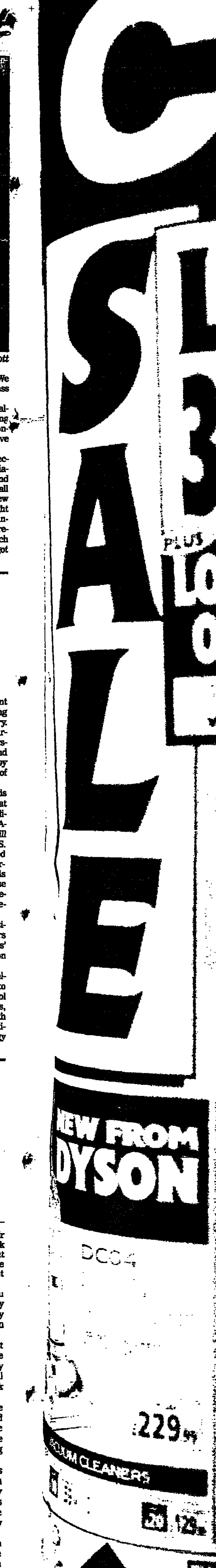
Time was running out because no new home could be found and they faced death by lethal injection – until West Midlands Safari Park stepped in.

The pair will be moved to the park in Bewdley, Hereford and Worcester, next week, where they will eventually replace the park's dominant but ageing male lions.

Chris Webster, Woburn's chief executive, said: "I am hugely relieved and very pleased indeed that there has been a positive outcome, more positive than we could possibly have hoped for.

"When they started to plan the succession in their pride they remembered our situation and were only too happy to take on our two."

Bruno and Bantu had to be removed, both to avoid them suffering and to protect the fragile balance of the pride.





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Lions
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from
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French troops waiting to enter Macedonia, where a Nato force is assembling to patrol a peace deal in neighbouring Kosovo *Eric Feferberg*

Serbs move in for assault on Kosovo

By Marcus Tanner

FEARS THAT Serbia is about to launch a big military offensive in Kosovo grew last night, as the Yugoslav army massed troops and tanks around the province and international observers trying to enter Kosovo were detained on the frontier.

The US Defense Department said Belgrade had deployed at least 4,500 troops on the border of the province, backed by tanks, artillery, and armoured personnel carriers. At the same time, 13 tanks left the main barracks in the province's capital, Pristina, yesterday to join about 30 already stationed in the Vucitrn area, north of Pristina.

Eight employees of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), meanwhile, were forced to spend the night in their cars after being prevented from entering Kosovo from Macedonia. "It's tense," said Beatrice Lacoste, a spokesperson. "They were being held – they can't go to Kosovo." At least one of the mcnitors is British.

The moves to block the monitors fed speculation that the Serbs are planning attacks on Kosovo villages as part of a campaign against "terrorists" seeking independence from Serbia.

In Belgrade, the Yugoslav army said its burst of activity was a "winter training exercise".

Most observers said they believe the army aims to drive the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) from Vucitrn, which has been the scene of several armed skirmishes this week.

A KLA spokesman told Reuters news agency: "They say they are on field manoeuvres, but what army do you know goes on manoeuvres during a war? Obviously they are looking to attack our positions to push us back."

The KLA moved into the area in October. Serbs have recently been leaving en masse, after attacks on ethnically mixed villages and a rash of shootings this week in which one Serb was killed.

Already the army's activity has sent about 4,000 Albanians fleeing from their villages, according to aid agencies in Kosovo. Massacres of Albanian civilians at Racak and elsewhere have made the Serb military an object of terror to the province's non-Serb majority.

The Albanian government complained yesterday to the Nato secretary general, Javier Solana, that Serbia was engineering a confrontation with the Kosovars to sabotage peace talks, which are due to restart on 15 March.

The last round of talks ended inconclusively in Rambouillet, near Paris, on Tuesday. "Belgrade is sending troops massively into the region in preparation for a general offensive against Kosovo," the Albanians said.

From Spain, Mr Solana warned Yugoslavia against trying to alter the military balance on the ground before 15 March. "These weeks are to consolidate peace, not to take advantage and make any change in the situation." he said, although he did not reveal what measures Nato would take if the Serbs did attack.

Students rip down Israeli barbed wire

By Patrick Cockburn in Jerusalem

A THOUSAND Lebanese college *students tore down barbed* wire around a village in southern Lebanon yesterday that the Israelis sealed off 10 days ago.

Chanting "Death to Israel", "We are all for our nation" and "God is great", they danced in the main square of Arnoun as Israeli soldiers fired over their heads to disperse them.

The students, Christian and Muslim, gathered from universities all over Lebanon to protest against Israel's takeover of Arnoun, outside the Israeli occupation zone, on 17 February.

The Israeli army says it was trying to protect residents and their soldiers from attacks by the Lebanese guerrilla movement Hizbollah.

The students, carrying Lebanese flags, cut the wire and moved in yesterday morning. An Israeli spokesman said there were no casualties and the demonstrators later left Arnoun.

Heavy shelling by Israeli artillery in the area has reduced the population of Arnoun from 2,000 Lebanese to 35. Israel also demolished 14 homes in the village, saying they were being used by Hizbollah to make roadside bombs.

Lebanon has protested to the United Nations and the United States over Israel's expansion of its self-declared security zone, set up in 1985.

The Lebanese Prime Minister, Salim al-Hoss, said: "Israel's assertions that it wishes to withdraw from Lebanon sound absurd as it annexes yet another village."

Israel says people from Arnoun can continue to cross in and out of the security zone by using a checkpoint at Kafr Tibneet.

Dore Gold, Israel's ambassador to the UN in New York, said Arnoun has "long been part of the security zone which Israel has been compelled to maintain in response to the continued terrorist attacks emanating from Lebanon".

There have been few rocket attacks and no ground assaults on Israel by Hizbollah since the agreement that ended the Israeli bombardment of southern Lebanon, known as "Grapes of Wrath", in 1996.

Earlier this week three Israeli officers from an élite paratroop unit were killed and five wounded when they were ambushed by Hizbollah.

Most Israeli casualties are inflicted by roadside bombs remotely controlled by command wire.

US babes roll over to Beethoven

By David Usborne in New York

THE MUSIC that rocks the cradle in America these days is not "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" or even lullabies sung by mummy. Instead, thanks to schemes across the land to distribute free classical music compact discs to the mothers of all newborn babies, it is the overtures and airs of Mozart, Bach and Beethoven.

The first with the idea was the former Governor of Georgia Zell Miller. She pushed through legislation in 1997 ensuring the distribution of CDs to new mums across the state in response to research suggesting that playing classical music to infants helps brain cell development – the so-called Mozart Effect. The CD, released by Sony Music, is called *Build Your Babies Brain through the Power of Music*.

The Georgia programme is already in its second year. And now others around the country, far from lampooning Miller as an eccentric, are following suit. Indeed, a whole new generation of Americans will be addicted – even conditioned – to listening to classical music. Some have already dubbed them the "Beethoven Babies".

Last year, Florida passed a Beethoven Babies Bill, requiring all state-run infant care facilities to play at least one symphony to their wards every day. Tennessee is launching a scheme whereby every new mother will receive a certificate for another all-classical baby tape, *Listen, Learn, and Grow*. A similar programme for classical CD distribution has also been launched in Colorado.

It may not be long before every American baby will be jiggling to *Air on a G String* and *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*.

ears for reconciliation in Rwanda s Hutus are moved off their land

ARY BRAID
caca, Rwanda

QUEUE snakes along the road into the hot, hazy dis- e. Thousands of barefoot, ed-clothed Hutus are con- ging on Macaca for the st hand-out of blankets, p and water cans from istian Aid.

Across Rwanda's war- aged, north-west region – ere Hutu extremists, re- onsible for the 1994 genocide a million Tutsis and moder- e Hutus, continue to engage e Tutsi-led Rwandan army – een and fertile fields lie aban- oned and crops destroyed.

In the past year, in the shad- y of the towering volcanic ountains that mark Rwanda's order with Uganda, hundreds, erhaps thousands, of men, women and children have died. Post-genocide, ordinary Hutus find themselves stuck between a rock and a hard place. Some have been murdered by Hutu extremists (including former local leaders) whom they refused to help or hide, while others have been killed by government troops for collaborating with the enemy. Many have simply died in the vicious bush war's crossfire.

More than 600,000 Hutus – the north-west has virtually no Tutsi population – have been internally displaced in the only region where the genocidal killers refuse to fade away. But in recent months the Rwandan government has gained the upper hand in the bloody conflict with a combination of military attacks and an offensive to win local hearts and minds.

Though no one can predict how long it will last, peace has broken out. The displaced, however, have not gone home to the isolated shacks that have traditionally sprinkled almost every hillside. As if they had not suffered enough upheaval – many of these people spent two years in Congolese refugee camps after fleeing Rwanda with the murderous Hutu militiamen – they are at the centre of a radical government experiment in social engineering.

"Villagisation" has arrived, and the displaced are being moved into new cluster settlements. The revolutionary change is taking place at a tearing pace. In just three months almost 300,000 people have been moved into the new villages. Another 300,000 – mostly languishing in displaced persons' camps – are poised to follow.

The Tutsi-controlled Rwandan government insists villagisation is what the local people want. But critics say the Hutu population is being forced to move to hastily built villages near main roads for military reasons.


Hutus who have been moved from their land under Rwanda's villagisation programme walking to Macaca to receive aid *John Voos*

Villages – *umudugudus* – may be alien in a land where people prefer their nearest neighbour to keep a decent distance, but they will help the government to control the Hutu homeland, and separate insurgents from civilians who collaborate – either out of choice or fear.

At Macaca the signs of war, and endless, miserable disruption are everywhere. Alongside the road a hillside lies wasted. Six weeks ago 46,000 people were living on the slope, in makeshift shelters, waiting for relocation.

Everyone has been dispersed now to *umudugudus* such as Kalingolera, a mile down the road. Trying to gauge the real level of support for villagisation in Kalingolera, and elsewhere, is difficult.

First, access to the area is restricted by the government and continuing insecurity. Despite claims that the government has overstretched itself by sending forces into neighbouring Congo to hunt down Hutu militia leaders, the north-west is awash with soldiers. Aid workers venture in only with army escorts. The roads are heavily patrolled and without government permission it is almost impossible to visit camps or villages.

At Kalingolera two soldiers with AK47s hover while Muhanuk Felicien, 42, describes how he moved here on Christmas Day with his wife, Nzatumabakuze, and six children. From a pitiful, temporary shack – the government is promising houses, but not yet – he points to the distant hill and his old house. His fields once began at his back door. Now it takes up to an hour to reach them.

"We had to leave our home because of the infiltrators," he says. "They demanded services and food. And if you refused, they could do anything, even kill you."

He describes, in the flat, matter-of-fact manner of those used to suffering, how his daughter was killed in crossfire. So were his sister-in-law and her two children.

"In the end," he says, "it was safer to be with the government soldiers." While he says most people feel safer in the villages he adds some would still prefer to return to their old homes.

That is clearly not an option. The Hutus have not been frog-marched into the new settlements. But that does not mean they have had a choice. Even the owner of a relatively luxurious, brick-built house in a nearby valley has had to move into a new settlement. "Even if you have a house 10 storeys high it will have to be abandoned if it is not in a village," says a local priest, full square behind the policy.

Post genocide, the Hutu political position is, understandably, weak. And such is the culture of obedience – which after all helped to facilitate three months of massacres nationwide – and top-down government that people are not accustomed to thinking for themselves or being consulted. There is a chasm between what the rural Hutu – dirt-poor and uneducated – says and thinks.

Still, at Kalingolera, a few older men dare to say that the old way of living was best. But nearly all the rest sing villagisation's praises. John Rucyahana, an Anglican bishop and one of a new generation of moderate Hutu community leaders installed in the north-west since 1994, articulates the collective local way.

What if someone insists on remaining in their own home? "The government has a plan," he says. "And everyone has to follow it or it is politically self-defeating." The bishop argues that villagisation will mean not just security for his beleaguered people but their first access to clean water and promised schools and clinics. It also seems clear that anyone who does not comply with "the plan" risks being regarded as an insurgent sympathiser.

"At first the people did not fully trust the new government," he says. "But they are now beginning to see that it is the way forward. My people are still suffering from lack of food and shelter but the killing, at least, has stopped. It is time for people to stop existing and start living."

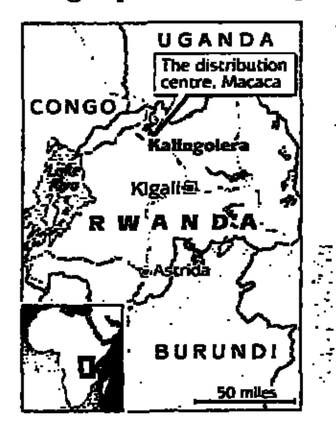
Only a minority of Hutus, he insists, supported the genocide. "I counsel people who are still traumatised and ashamed by what was done by fellow Hutus ... as traumatised as Tutsi survivors."

Some in the charity sector agree villagisation might be a useful developmental tool. "But the problem is that no one has been told exactly what kind of revolution the government is undertaking," says one non-governmental organisation (NGO) spokesperson. "And internationally other programmes of villagisation have been a disaster." So secretive is the government about proposed legislation for land reform that rumours are circulating of Soviet-style collective farming, or an elaborate wheeze to deliver land – farmed by 90 per cent of the population – into the hands of a few.

Even in the new, united Rwanda, where talk of ethnic difference is officially discouraged, the political context cannot be ignored, according to another NGO spokesperson. "We still have a Tutsi-led government seemingly imposing a policy in areas predominantly Hutu." The real danger, according to some donors, would be if a policy in which locals seem to have had little say fails from lack of planning or money. That would only exacerbate Hutu resentments and bitter ethnic divisions.



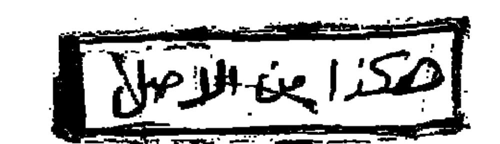
A displaced Tutu child in a T-shirt received from an aid agency at Mucaca camp



Charities are terrified to put their criticisms on the record for fear of offending a government sensitive to criticism. But they are meeting to discuss their position. Inevitably it is they who will be asked to fund the revolution.

Some Western diplomats, meanwhile – mainly concerned that an insurgency which threatened the whole country be eliminated – seem prepared to cut the government more slack. "It has been an extraordinary movement in just three months," says one. "But it looks less sinister that other international examples of villagisation."

Even he allows, however, that it might be wise to withhold donor funds until the government lays bare its plans. Until then suspicion will linger that autocratic leaders are pushing the Hutu heartland into fresh disaster, one that could have appalling consequences for reconciliation.



Military 'rigging' Nigeria's elections

BY ALEX DUVAL SMITH
in Lagos

INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS of today's Nigerian presidential elections were heading for a clash with the military regime, after the former US president Jimmy Carter said he was worried about voting malpractices and ballot box fraud.

The comments by Mr Carter, who heads a delegation of 60 US observers, were welcomed by his own team, US Republicans and the European Union's 100 monitors who until now have spoken only off the record of their concerns.

These concerns have included a claim that about 16 million voter registration cards have not been accounted for, and numerous reports of ballot box stuffing and inflated voter tallies, especially in the southern oil-producing states, where voting has also been marred by ethnic violence.

Mr Carter urged the two candidates in the election, Olusegun Obasanjo and Ola Falae, to urge their supporters to respect election regulations.

He also criticised the military regime for failing to publish a constitution ahead of the elections, which began at local authority level last December.

Ten days ago, the regime of General Abdulsalami Abubakar announced it had re-enacted the country's 1979 constitution. The move meant little to Nigerians who have not been informed of the future powers of the bodies they have been voting for, such as the House of Representatives.

Today's vote is to elect a president who will serve for four years as head of Nigeria's fourth republic since independence from Britain in 1960. In 39 years Nigeria has known civilian rule for only 10. The new president, who must gain at least 25 per cent of the votes in two-thirds of Nigeria's states, will formally take over on 29 May.

Since 1960 dictators and coups have succeeded one another, and statistics and election boundaries have been manipulated. That is not difficult, as Nigeria's real population could range from 90 to 128 million.

Sixty million ballots, printed in Britain and flown in on Thursday, are thought to be "about the right number" for the 57 million people who, in October, gave their names, ages and thumbprints to registration officers around the country.

The campaigns, which began after primaries held only two weeks ago, were dominated by pacts between powerful individuals rather than by issues.

But Abdul Oroh, director of the Civil Liberties Organisation, said: "This is the best we can do for the moment. We cannot expect elections organised by the military to be democratic. This is a step in the right direction."

Balarabe Musa, former governor of Kaduna state, said: "The system is such that only a thief can come to power in elections in Nigeria.

"The person who takes over in May will be among the richest and most corrupt of Nigerians."



Olusegun Obasanjo, in traditional Nigerian chief's robes and brandishing a fly whisk, delights crowds of supporters at a packed rally *David Guttenfelder/AP*

Only Obasanjo can win race to lead nation



Ole Falae: The underdog

BY ALEX DUVAL SMITH
in Lagos

OLU FALAE, the underdog in the presidential elections, has centred his two-week campaign on the need for a clean break with military rule. But Falae was a finance minister for General Ibrahim Babangida from 1989 to 1991.

He is a Yoruba from the southwest, so likely to do well in and around the economic capital, Lagos. But he is weak nationally, not least because voters are confused about which party he belongs to.

Yoruba nationalists see him as the natural successor to Moshood Abiola, the president-elect who died in General Sani Abacha's custody last year. Abachi died weeks later.

Falae started out with the Alliance for Democracy (AD) but now runs on the ticket of the All People's Party. His campaign team says two weeks has not been long enough to travel the width and breadth of this gigantic country, without the jets and cars provided for General Olusegun Obasanjo, 63. But the parties have only themselves to blame for the short campaign; none wanted to show its hand far ahead of the presidential elections.

Falae, 60 and Yale-educated, is a free-marketeer who believes the best way to combat corruption is to remove official controls. He was the architect of a stringent structural adjustment plan under General Babangida that went much further than anything the International Monetary Fund might have proposed.

He claims the plan was badly implemented by the military and that, when he left the finance ministry, the naira was 7.50 to the US dollar. The rate yesterday was 91 to the dollar.

Falae's manifesto includes free education, decentralisation of power and privatisation of electricity distribution. Obasanjo's is unclear.

The Falae way to get Nigeria back on its feet despite the low price of oil, which accounts for 95 per cent of Nigerian exports, includes expansion of gas production and diversification.

Obasanjo, the former military ruler who handed power to a civilian government in 1979, has since built an international reputation as a politician of vision. He is the favourite to win today's presidential elections.

His opponents say he is funded by the military establishment and, if he wins, he will merely be a military leader in mufti. He certainly has the wealthiest backers. A fund-raising dinner last Monday in Abuja allegedly raised 350 million naira (£20m), with N120m from a single donor.

Obasanjo was jailed in 1995 by Abacha for allegedly staging a coup. He was among the first released by the present leader, Abdulsalami Abubakar, when he took power last June.

Big business threat to quit Germany

BY LEA PATERSON

GERHARD SCHRÖDER'S red-green coalition is not even six months old, but already the honeymoon period with the German business community seems to be over.

Growing concerns about tax reform, higher wages and economic slowdown have prompted many of Germany's most powerful businesses to take direct action in an attempt to push the government into pro-industry reforms.

This week, Allianz, Europe's biggest insurer, became the latest multinational to threaten to locate elsewhere if the red-green coalition presses ahead with controversial economic reforms putting 73,000 jobs at risk.

In Allianz's case, the main bone of contention was proposed changes to the tax system that could, according to the company, cost it almost £1bn over the next four years.

Helmut Perlet, Allianz's chairman, described the government's plans to restructure corporate taxation as "unjust and overdone", and said he would move key parts of his business out of the country unless Chancellor Schröder and his colleagues backed down. A spokesman for the company said: "We have a duty to protect our shareholders and investors. Some businesses can be transferred relatively quickly."

Allianz's threat came just days after Dana Corporation, the US motor component manufacturer, switched production from Germany to Leeds, and followed a similar move from the electronics giant Sony. Observers say these are not isolated incidents, but rather reflect growing dissatisfaction among the business community with the economic policies of the coalition. Business concerns focus not only on the structure and the level of corporate taxation – which has a top rate of 45 per cent compared with 30 per cent in the UK – but also on labour costs. According to some calculations, employment costs in Germany are, on average, some 70 per cent higher than in Britain.

The pay deal struck last week in the German metal industry did little to reassure employers concerned about rising costs. After a bitter dispute and threats of widespread industrial action, IG Metall, Germany's biggest trade union, negotiated a wage increase for its members of between 3.6 and 4.2 per cent, substantially above the rate of German inflation.



Gerhard Schröder: The honeymoon is over

Analysts now expect similar pay deals to be struck across the metal, engineering and electrical industries, and have predicted that the consequences for German business could be severe.

Heinrich von Pierer, chief executive of the industrial group Siemens, is just one leading businessman to argue that his costs will increase substantially because of the IG Metall deal. Siemens' costs could soar by £300m a year, he estimated, and analysts have warned that other German industrial giants could face similar cost increases.

Economists at the investment bank ABN Amro said: "The main issue for companies is how they will respond to this increase in costs.

"Industrial companies can no longer pass on higher costs in the form of higher prices. Inevitably, the short-term result will be a direct hit to corporate profit margins. Companies may be forced to cut costs through further job-shedding."

None of this is pleasant news for Chancellor Schroder, who has made the challenge of driving down unemployment from its current level of 4.5 million a centrepiece of his economic policy.

Faced with a rapidly slowing economy – which contracted in the fourth quarter of 1998 for the first time in three years – the government has begun to badger the European Central Bank (ECB) for help.

Most vocal among those asking for interest-rate cuts has been the Finance Minister, Oskar Lafontaine. So far, however, his entreaties have fallen on deaf ears. Wim Duisenberg, the ECB president, insists he has to balance the demands of all 11 countries in the euro-zone. "The high unemployment rate in Europe is far more the consequence of structural rigidities within the European labour and product markets than adverse cyclical developments," said Mr Duisenberg. "The solution is to be found, above all, in structural reforms."



Pupils at the Dutch Society for Open Christianity's school in St Petersburg, which has been surrounded by police *Sergey Tyagin*

Troops in siege over 'zombie' pupils

BY HELEN WOMACK
in Moscow

CHILDREN AS young as four were reported yesterday to be inside a foreign-run religious school in St Petersburg, where older pupils and teachers have been locked all week in a stand-off with heavily armed police.

While the siege dragged on, the governor of St Petersburg, Vladimir Yakovlev, issued a warning against religious sects which, he said, were turning out "zombified children".

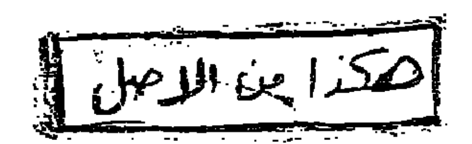
However, although police said they had orders not to yield, one officer assured reporters: "No matter what the order is, we will never attack the children."

The siege began on Monday morning when police blocked access to the school, which is run by the Dutch Society for Open Christianity. Only a few teachers and pupils were inside the building at the time. But more slipped in to support the occupation, so that eventually 40 children and 20 adults were inside.

Police said they were enforcing a recent ruling of the St Petersburg City Arbitration Court that the society could no longer use the school rent-free and should leave. The society argued that since it had renovated the building, the rent-free agreement should stand or alternative accommodation be provided.

City officials blamed "irresponsible school staff" for "using children to pursue their goals". Governor Yakovlev ordered his officials to "look carefully into all the religious schools and into what they teach because we already have zombified children".

Freedom of religion is supposed to be guaranteed in post-Communist Russia. However, nationalism is rising and the view is becoming prevalent that a "true Russian can only belong to the Orthodox Church".



Israeli murder suspect escapes trial

BY DAVID USBORNE
in New York

WASHINGTON WAS furious yesterday after the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that an American-Jewish teenager charged with a grisly murder in Maryland 18 months ago – and who fled within days to Israel – should not be extradited to stand trial because he can claim to be an Israeli citizen.

By a three-to-two majority, the court said Samuel Sheinbein, 18, should not be returned to the United States to stand trial for the murder of Alfredo Tello, a former friend, because of a 1978 law that bars the extradition of Israeli citizens to face trials abroad.

The court said the law superseded a 1963 extradition treaty signed by Israel with America.

Mr Sheinbein, who had a record of behavioural problems, and a teenage acquaintance, Aaron Needle, were quickly tied to the murder by detectives after they found Tello's body in the garage of an empty house in Wheaton, a comfortable suburb of Washington.

The case made headlines because of the sheer grisliness of what was found. The body of Tello, 19, better known as Freddy and a worker in a local tropical fish shop, had been charred almost beyond recognition and dismembered.

Beside it, detectives found an acetylene gas bottle and a new circular power saw. The legs and arms of the teenager were never found. Aaron Needle, the other accused man, died after hanging himself with a bedsheet last April while awaiting trial in prison.

American fury at this week's decision stems from the tenuous nature of Mr Sheinbein's claim to Israeli citizenship. He was born and lived all his life in the US. His father, Sol Sheinbein, a patent lawyer, was born in British-ruled Palestine and lived in Israel for two years after it was created before leaving for America in 1950. He has Israeli citizenship and his son, therefore, can also claim it.

The court made its ruling in spite of direct appeals to Israel to grant the extradition from both the US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, and the Attorney General, Janet Reno. Ms Reno later voiced her disappointment.

The decision was defended by the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. "In a state of law the interpreter of the law is the Supreme Court, whose decision we must honour. I am sure that the United States, which is also a state of law, understands this," he said.

Israel's Justice Minister, Tsahi Hanegbi, promised yesterday that Mr Sheinbein would be brought swiftly to trial in Israel.

He added, however, that prosecuting him outside the US would be difficult. "It has become clear that the existence of such trials outside the borders of the state where the crime was committed makes it nearly impossible to carry out justice," he said.

The Israeli government had been hoping for a different decision. With so many Jews living abroad with claims to Israeli citizenship, the government is concerned that the country could become a sanctuary for criminals seeking to evade justice in other states.

Prosecutors in Houston fear another man with Israeli citizenship charged this week with killing a clerk in a wig shop may have fled to Israel.

That worry was highlighted by one of the Israeli judges. Chief Justice Aharon Barak noted that hundreds of thousands of Israelis live abroad and that the Sheinbein decision risks turning "Israel into a sanctuary state" for criminals.

In the US House of Representatives Albert Wynn, member for the Maryland district where Tello was killed, said he was "appalled.

"The court undermines the spirit of co-operation embodied in the Israeli treaty with the United States. If the situation were reversed, we would be expected to co-operate and we expect no less from our allies," he said.



Samuel Sheinbein (front left) sits under guard in Israel's Supreme Court David Silverman/Reuters

The man who talks for Timor

WEEK IN THE LIFE
JOSE RAMOS-HORTA

JOSE RAMOS-HORTA, the Nobel peace laureate and defacto "foreign minister" for East Timor's resistance movement, has not had much sleep since Indonesia made its unexpected offer of independence to the territory it has occupied for 23 years.

Last week he was on three continents. On the Sunday he was in the United States where he spends most of his time. Increased interest in Timor has ensured he is "reasonably paid" for his many lectures across the country.

"I used to be grateful if I was given $100 [£60]," he says. "Now my rate is $10,000 [£6,000] per lecture."

But the pace of diplomatic activity on the Timor front has meant most of Mr Ramos-Horta's time is spent in talks, talks and more talks. On Monday he had breakfast with an "old friend", Richard Holbrooke, the American UN ambassador-designate. "We met in a personal capacity," he adds quickly.

The United States is not quite sure what to do about Timor, so contacts with the Timorese resistance are conducted with care. There is strong support for the Timorese in Congress, and Mr Ramos-Horta, an ebullient and urbane networker, was busy working the phones, encouraging its members to support funding requests for a US peace-keeping presence after the Indonesians withdraw.

By Monday night he was flying to Lisbon to meet the President and Prime Minister of Portugal. The former colonial rulers of Timor are proving very helpful, he says. "It speaks volumes about their honesty. They readily acknowledge the way they mishandled decolonisation in 1974-75 and they want to make up for it."

Between meetings Mr Ramos-Horta was on the phones again, trying to put together a panel of high-level international economic advisers for the new Timor. He also spent a lot of time on the phone to Xanana Gusmao, the leader of the Timorese resistance recently released into house arrest from jail by the Indonesians.

Mr Gusmao has been trying to find a way for Mr Ramos-Horta to return to Timor but the Indonesians are not keen to have him on the premises.

"Xanana says they can handle him because he was leading the armed resistance which did not cost them that much," says Mr Ramos-Horta. "What cost them more was the damage to their international reputation. Being a proud people they cannot forgive me for the damage I did."

So he is busy everywhere but in Indonesia. His main Timorese contact is with exiles. In Lisbon he convened a meeting of 300 leaders-in-exile. "All the young people were smiling, I have not seen that for a long time," he says.

They stopped smiling and initially looked puzzled when he told them that after independence he would be standing on the side of those who advocated union with Indonesia, and with migrants who had settled in Timor from other parts of Indonesia.

"For 23 years I was the leading voice of Timor's cause because there was no more vulnerable group, so I will again stand on the side of the vulnerable group," he told them. He knew many of those present had been tortured by the Indonesians, or seen their families killed and their sisters raped.

"The room was silent, then I saw many heads nodding in



Jose Ramos-Horta: The main voice of resistance

agreement," he says. "We have to have tolerance and reconciliation." He thinks everything will be lost if that does not happen. Not one person raised a note of dissent when he finished speaking.

By the end of the day he was on a plane again, heading for the Portuguese enclave of Macau. The governor promised to help to mobilise Chinese businessmen to invest in the new Timor.

Mr Ramos-Horta left the governor's palace for a more humble meeting place, to address the Liurais, or traditional royal leaders of Timor. He assured these hereditary rulers they would have a chamber, similar to the House of Lords, alongside an elected parliament.

The Independent met Mr Ramos-Horta in Hong Kong as he talked to more potential investors.

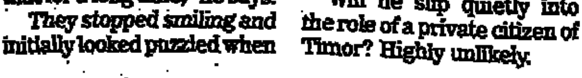
His own role in the new Timor? Mr Ramos-Horta threw up his hands and said: "I only hope I can get away without being in the government." He wants to be a private citizen, not bound by the protocol and duties of being a foreign minister.

When he collected his Nobel prize in Oslo he wore a black tie for the first time. "I felt ridiculous," he says. "It's not in my genes to be in these formal situations."

Besides, he says, with a twinkle: "What would happen if I were foreign minister and a Timorese Monica shows up? I might be impeached like President Clinton."

By Friday he was in the air again, heading for his temporary exile "home" in Sydney, where he can spend only two months a year.

Will he slip quietly into the role of a private citizen of Timor? Highly unlikely.



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BUSINESS

BRIEFING

Rugby in talks on Australian deal

RUGBY, the building materials group, is in talks to buy the cement and lime business of its Australian rival, Adelaide Brighton. Industry sources said that the deal, set to cost around £100m, would boost Cockburn Cement, Rugby's Australian operation. Rugby is believed to be looking at acquiring a controlling stake in Adelaide for around £70m, and buying out its minority shareholders, Pioneer and CSR, two Australian building materials groups, for around £30m. Meanwhile, Rugby is thought to have tabled an indicative offer for Scancem, the Scandinavian construction materials giant, which owns Castle Cement, the UK's second largest producer of cement.

British Energy eyes US plant



BRITISH ENERGY, whose chief executive is Peter Rawlins (pictured), is hoping to expand its nuclear power interests in the US after being granted exclusive negotiating rights to conduct due diligence on a nuclear plant in Vermont. The rights have been granted to AmeriGen, British Energy's 50-50 joint venture with PECO Energy of Philadelphia. The venture was formed in 1997 and struck its first deal last July when it agreed to pay $100m for a plant on Three Mile Island, the scene of one of the world's worst nuclear accidents. The current target is Vermont Yankee, a 540-megawatt water reactor built in 1972 which is the east coast state's only nuclear plant.

Brewer to create 1,450 jobs

SCOTTISH & NEWCASTLE, Britain's biggest brewer, is to create 1,450 jobs by investing £54m in the expansion of its T&J Bernard brand of pubs. The expansion will raise the number of T&J Bernard outlets to 160 from 70 by 2002. The pubs are based in town and city centres and aimed at the over-25s. S&N has also been expanding its Rat & Parrot and John Barras pub chains.

STOCK MARKETS

FTSE 100 | DOW JONES | NIKKEI

Dow Jones index and graph at 5pm

INDICES

Index	Close	Change	Change(%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield(%)
FTSE 100	6175.10	-31.40	-0.51	6319.80	4599.20	2.60
FTSE 250	5248.30	22.20	0.43	5970.90	4247.60	3.21
FTSE 350	2923.60	-10.70	-0.37	2978.70	2210.40	2.70
FTSE All Share	2825.39	-9.51	-0.34	2886.52	2143.53	2.74
FTSE SmallCap	2277.30	6.00	0.26	2793.80	1834.40	3.54
FTSE Fledgling	1243.68	3.10	0.25	1517.10	1046.20	4.45
FTSE AIM	823.50	2.30	0.28	1146.90	761.30	1.15
FTSE Eurotop 100	2804.45	-20.02	-0.71	3079.27	2018.15	2.10
FTSE Eurotop 300	1222.63	-6.48	-0.53	1332.07	880.63	1.99
Dow Jones	9273.16	-78.5[illegible]	-0.84	9647.96	7400.30	1.67
Nikkei	14367.54	-102.9[illegible]	-0.71	17352.35	12787.90	0.99
Hang Seng	9858.49	200.42	2.08	11926.16	6544.79	3.55
Dax	4911.81	-46.77	-0.94	6217.83	3833.71	1.74
S&P 500	1230.33	-12.54	-1.01	1283.91	923.32	1.29
Nasdaq	2286.22	-38.01	-1.63	2533.44	1357.09	0.29
Toronto 300	6274.20	-32.60	-0.52	7837.70	5320.90	1.71
Brazil Bovespa	8801.22	127.15	1.47	12339.14	4575.69	7.04
Belgium Bel20	3361.88	-42.96	-1.26	3713.21	2695.72	2.11
Amsterdam Exch	536.12	1.61	0.30	600.65	366.58	1.92
France CAC 40	4092.94	-59.62	-1.44	4404.94	2881.21	1.93
Milan MIB30	35055.00	45.00	0.13	39170.00	24175.00	1.17
Madrid Ibex 35	9997.30	-54.80	-0.55	10989.80	6869.90	1.76
Irish Overall	5335.85	8.57	0.16	5581.70	3732.57	1.53
S Korea Comp	520.06	20.92	4.19	651.95	277.37	0.18
Australia ASX	2879.90	-24.90	-0.86	2948.70	2386.70	3.21

INTEREST RATES

SHORT STERLING | UK 10 YEAR GILT | US LONG BOND

at 5pm. German money market rates equal euro rate

MONEY MARKET RATES / **BOND YIELDS**

Index	3 month	Yr chg	1 Year	Yr chg	10 year	Yr chg	Long bond	Yr chg
UK	5.46	-2.10	5.35	-2.19	4.53	-1.51	4.48	-1.50
US	5.03	-0.65	5.39	-0.39	5.31	0.34	5.59	0.36
Japan	0.27	-0.57	0.30	-0.46	1.96	0.09	3.12	0.62
Germany	3.10	-0.42	3.07	-0.69	4.03	-0.90	4.96	-0.53

CURRENCIES

$/£ | €/£ | ¥/£

*from 1/1/99 for euro

POUND

	at 5pm	Change	*Yr Ago
Dollar	1.6053	0.00c	1.6437
Euro	1.4582	+0.99c	1.4079
Yen	190.59	-¥0.99	208.98
£ Index	100.60	+0.00	105.20

DOLLAR

	at 5pm	Change	*Yr Ago
Sterling	0.6229	0.00p	0.6084
Euro	0.9083	-19.75c	0.8573
Yen	118.69	-¥0.81	127.25
$ Index	107.70	+0.00	108.70

OTHER INDICATORS

	Close	Chg	Yr Ago
Brent Oil ($)	10.57	-0.21	13.28
Gold ($)	286.75	-1.10	294.55
Silver ($)	5.58	0.16	6.05

	Index	Chg	Yr ago	Next figs
GDP	115.40	3.00	112.04	Mar
RPI	163.40	2.40	159.57	Feb
Base Rates	5.50	7.25		

Oil at 5pm

www.bloomberg.com/uk SOURCE: BLOOMBERG

TOURIST RATES

Country	Rate
Australia ($)	2.4798
Austria (schillings)	19.27
Belgium (francs)	56.65
Canada ($)	2.3448
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8123
Denmark (kroner)	10.52
Finland (markka)	8.4273
France (francs)	9.2300
Germany (marks)	2.7608
Greece (drachma)	453.74
Hong Kong ($)	11.96
Ireland (punts)	1.1057
Indian (rupees)	61.22
Israel (shekels)	6.0119
Italy (lira)	2736
Japan (yen)	186.31
Malaysia (ringgics)	5.8310
Malta (lira)	0.6056
Mexican (nuevo peso)	14.43
Netherlands (guilders)	3.0963
New Zealand ($)	2.9320
Norway (kroner)	12.28
Portugal (escudos)	280.51
Saudi Arabia (rials)	5.8317
Singapore ($)	2.6356
South Africa (rands)	9.5123
Spain (pesetas)	233.59
Sweden (kronor)	12.73
Switzerland (francs)	2.2452
Thailand (bahts)	54.82
Turkey (liras)	549203
USA ($)	1.5552

Rates for indication purposes only

Source: Thomas Cook

Alliance shares fall despite promise of £740m buyback

By Andrew Verity

SHARES IN Alliance & Leicester fell by 6 per cent yesterday in spite of an announcement by the mortgage bank that it will return up to £740m to its shareholders.

The market punished A&L for announcing underlying operating profits of £455m, at the bottom end of the range of analysts' expectations. Most had been expecting nearer £470m and rival banks have reported higher-than-expected profits.

Traders were also annoyed by a fall in A&L's profit margins, affected by a price war in the mortgage market. A&L has sought to grab market share by offering competitive mortgage rates and keeping a tight rein on credit.

While the strategy has succeeded, boosting market share from 3.4 to 4.2 per cent, analysts were surprised to see profit margins shrink to less than 3 per cent.

Shares in Alliance & Leicester dropped from 891p to 840.5p, wiping £127 from the value of the average retail investor's holding, now worth £2,100.

Richard Pym, finance director of A&L, said the company would return the surplus capital to shareholders by buying its own shares in the market after April, whenever it judges the action would increase earnings per share.

Mr Pym said the bank decided against a special dividend paid direct to shareholders. "That would give the money back to some shareholders who didn't want it – it could throw some shareholders into a higher tax band," he said.

He disappointed the market by adding that the group would not necessarily spend the entire £740m it held in surplus capital, and could spread the buyback over as much as three years.

The move follows recent returns of capital announced by Halifax, which is passing £1.5bn back to shareholders by changing its capital structure, and the Woolwich.

Yesterday some analysts questioned whether the mortgage bank's one million retail shareholders would benefit from the mooted buyback, which may have little impact on the value of their windfalls.

A year ago, Halifax announced a £1bn return of capital using the same method that A&L is proposing to use. In the year since then, its share price has fallen from over 950p to 767p yesterday.

However, others welcomed the move. Gavin Oldham, managing director of the Share Centre, a retail broker, said: "The excess capital hasn't been working for the shareholders and it has effectively been diluting the earnings per share. And if the company doesn't have the luxury of the excess capital it will wake up to the business challenges."

Privately, industry observers believe the recent spate of returns of capital could stem from a growing fear that the Government could introduce a new windfall tax on the "excess profits" of banks. Many bank executives remember a similar tax levied on banks in the mid-1980s, when they were judged to have made excess profits because of high interest rates used to curb inflation.

However, Don Cruikshank, appointed by Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, to run the Government's banking review, has indicated that a windfall tax on banks was unlikely to form part of his recommendations.

Separately, Mr Pym said the bank was planning cost cuts which would entail job losses but refused to say how many of the bank's 7,000 staff would be affected.



Go-Ahead's management team (from left) Ian Butcher, finance director, Martin Ballinger, managing director, and Chris Moyes, commercial director, at the company's results announcement yesterday *Nicola Kurtz*

Go-Ahead to seek rail deal renewals

By Philip Thornton
Transport Correspondent

GO-AHEAD, the public transport group, is to seek an early renegotiation of both its rail franchises in the wake of the Government's offer made at the National Rail Summit. The company said yesterday it was drawing up bids for Thames Trains and Thameslink, which both expire in April 2004.

The Government announced on Thursday that it was putting the rail network up for auction by allowing a limited number of franchises to be extended in exchange for a package of substantial passenger benefits.

Chris Moyes, Go-Ahead commercial director, said it believed it had a fair chance despite the franchises' current performance. The latest official figures awarded Thames a D grade and Thameslink a C.

He accepted that Thames's current performance had to be improved and said the Thameslink bid was confused by the £600m Thameslink 2000 upgrade project, which is now not due to be completed until 2006.

Thameslink is the fastest-growing railway, with passenger numbers up 11.6 per cent in its first year of privatisation.

Analysts believe the Government may decide it could get a better deal by throwing the franchise open to the market because of the benefits of the infrastructure upgrade. But Mr Moyes said that by 2004 the heavy work would have started to cause delays and choke off demand. He said Go-Ahead would offer new rolling stock for Thameslink to cope with the extra demand and on Thames to better cater for its long-distance routes. But he added: "We are not daft enough to think we could negotiate a longer deal on Thames while its performance is as it is."

Almost 17 per cent of trains were late last year on the network, which runs from London to the Thames Valley and the West Midlands.

The group yesterday reported a pre-tax profit of £21.4m for the six months to 2 January, a 21 per cent rise. The train businesses made an operating profit of £7.9m, a 39 per cent increase on £5.7m a year ago and a 6.5 per cent return on turnover. The interim dividend will rise to 3.5p from 3p.

Railtrack chief Horton set to retire

By Nigel Cope
Associate City Editor

SIR ROBERT HORTON, the controversial industrialist, is to step down as chairman of Railtrack later this year when he reaches his 60th birthday. The rail network group intends to recruit an external replacement and a search is under way.

"Sir Robert is 60 in August and told the board some time ago that he wanted to retire this year," a spokesman said.

Railtrack said the timing of the announcement was not related to the rail summit earlier this week, in which railway standards were criticised by the Government.

Sir Robert has been chairman of Railtrack since its formation in 1994 and helped steer the privatised track operator to its £2bn flotation two years later.

His departure brings to an end another chapter in a career studded with controversy. His reputation reached its nadir during the latter stages of his 30 year career at BP. By the time he became chairman of the oil giant in 1990 BP was a bloated under-achiever.

Cuts were inevitable but he did nothing to endear himself to workers with his abrasive style. It was during an interview with Fortune magazine that he made a remark that came to haunt him: "Because I am blessed by my good brain, I tend to get the right answer rather quicker and more often than most people."

He became one of Britain's most unpopular industrialists and in 1992 was ousted in a boardroom coup. "I don't think I'm arrogant and abrasive," he said later. "I tend to say what I think and don't disguise it."

His popularity was further dented when he moved to Railtrack and within months the network ground to a halt due to a bruising industrial relations dispute.

He tried an oil industry comeback with JKX Oil and Gas, though that too ended in failure. The company was rescued in 1997 by a £55m takeover from Ramco Energy at a fraction of the issue price.

Railtrack shares closed 77p higher yesterday at 1552p.



Sir Robert: To step down on reaching the age of 60

Zeneca sues US rival over 'false' drug claims

By Francesco Guerrera

ZENECA, the UK pharmaceutical giant, yesterday sued its US rival Eli Lilly, claiming that the American company conducted a "false and misleading" campaign to promote one of its drugs.

In a lawsuit filed in a New York court, the British group alleged that the US drug giant "systematically and deliberately attempted to mislead doctors" on the benefits of Evista, an osteoporosis drug.

According to Zeneca, Lilly's sales representatives told physicians that the drug helped to reduce the risk of breast cancer, even though it had only been approved as a treatment for osteoporosis – a bone-thinning disease which affects middle-aged women.

The UK company is the maker of Nolvadex, the leading product for the treatment of breast cancer, and one of Zeneca's best selling drugs. Last year Nolvadex sales totalled $369m in the US and around $500m worldwide. The drug is used by around 400,000 US patients and last year received approval to be used to prevent the disease in high-risk women.

The lawsuit said that Lilly's false claims prompted a number of doctors to prescribe Evista for breast cancer, leading to a drop in the sales of Nolvadex.

According to a Zeneca survey of over 500 doctors, one in three physicians were led to believe that Evista could be used as an alternative to Nolvadex. Zeneca, which is merging with its Swedish rival Astra, claimed that Lilly's campaign created "serious risk to public health" as more and more women are using Evista instead of Nolvadex. The British company is seeking undisclosed damages and wants Lilly to pay for an advertising campaign to deny the Evista cancer claims.

A spokesman for Lilly yesterday denied Zeneca's allegations: "We don't feel there is anything inappropriate in our promotion."

American growth fuels interest rate fears

By Lea Paterson

THE US ECONOMY grew at a far faster pace last year than first thought, official figures revealed yesterday, fuelling fears in world markets of a rise in US interest rates.

According to the Commerce Department, US gross domestic product grew at an annualised rate of 6.1 per cent in the fourth quarter of 1998, not, as previously estimated, at 5.6 per cent. A better-than-expected export performance and higher business investment lay behind the revisions, analysts said.

The stunning growth rate, which is more than three times the corresponding measure in the UK, sparked speculation about higher US interest rates.

In New York, the Dow Jones fell 72.53 points to 9293.81 by the mid-afternoon, with concerns about the outlook for technology stocks also weighing on sentiment. The unease on Wall Street spilled over to London, where the FTSE closed down 31.4 points at 6175.1. Other major European bourses also ended lower, although prices in the US bond market, which suffered heavy losses on Thursday, held steady.

Not all analysts were convinced that interest rates would necessarily rise in the US, where the inflationary outlook remains relatively benign. Several drew attention to yesterday's GDP deflator, a widely-followed measure of inflation, which rose at an annualised rate of 0.7 per cent, the smallest increase in four decades. Richard Iley at ABN Amro said: "With whole economy inflation – according to the gdp price deflator – continuing to hit new lows, the Fed can afford to sit tight for the time being."

Meanwhile, Lawrence Summers, the US deputy treasury secretary, sent the dollar higher against the yen after he urged Japan to stimulate growth via looser monetary policy. Mr Summers said Japan should not rely solely on a weaker exchange rate.

AROUND THE WORLD'S MARKETS

LONDON

FOOTSIE WEAKENED again, pulled down by another weak performance in New York. The blue chip index was lowered 31.4 points (after 49.9) in another busy session with share turnover topping 1 billion. The supporting indices were in better form. The mid cap index rose 22.2 to 5,248.3 and the small cap 6 to 2,277.3.

Cigarette shares made headway following the High Court dismissal of 46 smoking and cancer related claims. Gallaher improved 17.5p to 437.5p.

Derek Pain, page 21

NEW YORK

THE DOW JONES fell 90 points in early trading but almost halved losses later thanks to bargain hunting in technology shares. Just before midday the Dow was down 49.98 at 9,316.36, and Nasdaq was 31.02 lower at 2,295.80.

News that the US economy expanded at an annual rate of 6.1 per cent in the fourth quarter of last year fuelled fears of a possible rise in rates. DaimlerChrysler fell on reports that a team is in Tokyo negotiating the takeover of Nissan.

PARIS

WORRIES ABOUT Wall Street depressed both Frankfurt and Paris but the CAC40 fell furthest, closing 59.62 down at 4,092.94.

France Telecom was again the most traded stock, jumping 2.2 to 82.25 euros after the stock's weighting in trackers rose. Banking stocks were mixed, with Paribas and Société Génerale moving up and BNP going down. Renault eased ahead of results on Monday and reflecting investor concern at possibly losing out in merger activity in the Far East.

HONG KONG

THE HANG SENG index rose 200.42 to 9,858.49, closing just below the day's high, again encouraged by futures trading.

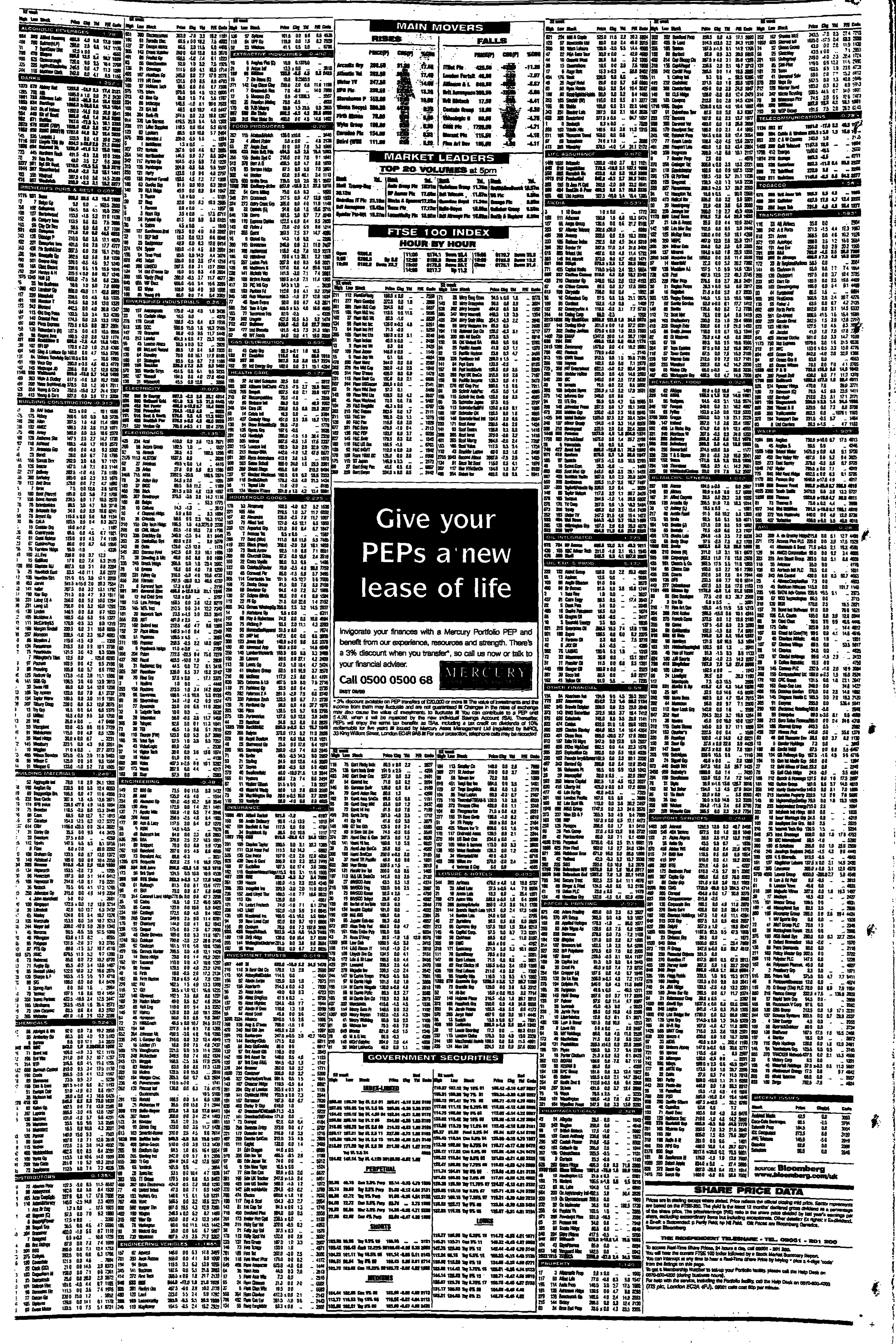
HSBC led the way, gaining 5 to HK$218.00 on talk of US investors buying the stock in anticipation of a share split and New York listing. Most banks also moved higher but FPB bank was down a touch after worse than expected results. Reports of a planned Disney theme park also boosted sentiment.

SEOUL

SOUTH KOREAN stocks rose by over 4 per cent on average, with the Korea Composite Index closing 20.29 better at 520.06. Fears of labour troubles subsided after the moderate FKTU said it would delay until the end of March a decision on whether to withdraw from the tripartite panel representing unions, employers and the government.

Industrial output and falling interest rates also bolstered confidence. The banking sub-index rose more than 8 per cent.





MAIN MOVERS

RISES

	PRICE(P)	CHG(P)	%CHG
Arcadia Grp	288.50	[illegible]	17.58
Atlantic Tel	282.50	[illegible]	17.49
Ulster TV	247.50	[illegible]	14.90
BPB Plc	238.50	[illegible]	13.28
Storehouse P	153.00	[illegible]	10.90
Waste Recycl	598.50	[illegible]	[illegible]
Firth Rixson	78.00	[illegible]	[illegible]
Wyko Group	108.00	[illegible]	[illegible]
Caradon Plc	154.00	[illegible]	[illegible]
Baird (WM)	111.00	[illegible]	[illegible]

FALLS

	PRICE(P)	CHG(P)	%CHG
JJNet Plc	428.00	[illegible]	-11.28
London Fortult	46.00	[illegible]	-7.97
Alliance & L	849.50	[illegible]	-6.67
Brit Aerospace	306.50	[illegible]	-5.88
Brit Biotech	17.50	[illegible]	-5.41
Costain Group	18.00	[illegible]	-5.26
Videologic G	80.00	[illegible]	-4.76
CRH Plc	1720.00	[illegible]	-4.71
Morant Plc	115.50	[illegible]	-4.15
Fine Art Dev	185.00	-4.50	-4.11

MARKET LEADERS

TOP 20 VOLUMES at 5pm

Stock	Vol.	Stock	Vol.	Stock	Vol.	Stock	Vol.
Shell Transp-Reg 38.12m		Abbey Group Plc	18.21m	Vodafone Group	11.76m	[illegible]	10.57m
Guardian IT Plc	25.10m	BP Amoco Plc	17.60m	Brit Telecom	11.67m	BG Plc	[illegible]
Brit Aerospace	19.43m	Marks & Spencer	17.22m	Guardian Royal	11.34m	Orange Plc	[illegible]
Syntax Plc-NPL	19.37m	Tesco Plc	17.12m	Rolls-Royce	10.00m	Caliber Group	[illegible]
		Lucasvarity Plc	[illegible]	Brit Airways Plc	10.00m	Smith & Nephew	[illegible]

FTSE 100 INDEX

HOUR BY HOUR

Open	6205.5		11:00	6174.1	Down 32.4	15:00	6170.7	Down 35.8
9:00	6205.5	Up 0.0	12:00	6180.0	Down 25.5	16:00	6193.3	Down 13.2
10:00	6182.8	Down 23.7	13:00	6172.8	Down 33.7	Close	6175.1	Down 31.4
			14:00	6217.7	Up 11.2			

GOVERNMENT SECURITIES

RECENT ISSUES

Stock	Price	Chg(p)	Code
Ambient Media	42.5	0.0	3053
Coca-Cola Beverages	98.5	-2.5	3794
Eskmuir Prop	184.5	0.0	3054
ICG Computers	273.5	8.8	3120
JWE Telecom	145.0	-5.0	2919
Omnica	52.0	0.0	3388
Selection	50.0	0.0	2848

source: Bloomberg www.bloomberg.com/uk

SHARE PRICE DATA

... Price reflects the official closing mid price. Sector movements ... the latest 12 months' declared gross dividend as a percentage ... (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per ... including exceptionals. Other details: Ex rights; x Ex-dividend, ... Nil Paid. Gilt Prices are Bloomberg Generics.

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Europe needs to create growth now



OUTLOOK

THE RECENT performance of the US economy has been nothing short of phenomenal. Even before yesterday's upward revisions to growth, the pace of expansion in the US was hard to believe. The latest estimate – an annualised rate of 6.1 per cent – puts the US firmly into the category of the Tiger economies of the Far East before the meltdown. That may in itself carry a message, but when you consider that official measures of inflation have yet to pick up any evidence of price pressure, it all begins to look as if the much-maligned proponents of the "new economy" could have been right after all.

However, even if there has been some improvement in the trade-off between growth and inflation in the US, it is difficult to see how the economy can continue to expand at this rate without something giving somewhere. Signs of strain in the country's current account are already more than apparent.

Financial markets have begun, probably rightly, to worry about an increase in US rates over the coming months. Fears of a US rate rise have been the trigger for many Wall Street corrections in the past, and it seems hard to believe the bulls when they argue that this time round such a move has already been fully discounted. Whether the correction will be anything other than a short-term stumble is less obvious. Many shots have already been fired at the Wall Street bubble. None of them have yet managed to bring the market crashing down to earth.

The more worrying scenario is that a rise in US interest rates, and a consequent slowdown in the world's largest economy, will end up plunging the whole world into recession. The industrialised world has been spared the full impact of the crisis in the emerging markets only thanks to the US's extraordinary propensity to consume. If growth in the US starts to crumble – as is looking increasingly likely – then the whole world will start to feel the pinch.

All this makes the case for stimulating growth in Europe even more compelling. It is time the eurozone started acting like the world power it so desperately wants to be. Until Europe starts to take up the slack on growth, it is difficult to be anything other than gloomy about global economic prospects.

Index tracking

ONE OF the most worrying stock market trends is the rise and rise of the index-tracker funds. There was another survey published this week, showing both that they are continuing to grow as a proportion of managed funds, and that they are continuing to outperform others. Everyone in the City knows it is wrong, everyone knows it is insane, but there seems to be nothing anyone can do to stop it. Like doomsday machines, the trackers keep coming, vacuuming up all before them.

The tracker fund's raison d'etre is logical, practical and compelling. Because no one, however inspired an investor they are, can hope indefinitely to keep spotting the market winners, it is best to spread your bets across the market as a whole.

Over the last two to three years, for instance, the hot sectors have been banks, telecommunications, pharmaceuticals and anything to do with computers. If you had had the foresight to invest in only those sectors, you would have done amazingly well. Unfortunately, since all these sectors looked relatively expensive even three years ago, very few investors will be in that position.

If on the other hand you had invested only in other sectors, you would have done amazingly badly. In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that investors should wish to spread their risk. To the despair of "active" fund managers – those that sell themselves on the basis of stock selection – trackers have consistently outperformed during the great bull market of recent history.

So much so, that trackers are now the Government's and the Office of Fair Trading's officially recommended investment vehicles. Why pay useless fund managers over the odds for underperformance when low-cost passive investment so consistently beats them, the Office of Fair Trading asked in a report last year.

It is hard to argue with the point. Nonetheless, the investment effect is a perverse and dangerous one. What it means is that the biggest and most favoured stocks attract money in ever-increasing amounts, regardless of the underlying fundamentals, which in turn means less money for the rest.

Take the two recent transatlantic mergers in the FTSE 100 – BP and Amoco, and Vodafone and AirTouch. British tracking investors were forced greatly to increase their weighting to these companies after the mergers went through, so as to take account of their much greater market capitalisations and their consequent relative position in the market as a whole.

Obviously that means less capital for other companies. But it is worse than this; the more Vodafone shares rise, the more Vodafone shares the trackers have to buy, making them more valuable still. Many trackers are being forced to invest in a way that few of their professional managers would think sensible or advantageous. Some of the more candid ones say it openly – "I wouldn't buy shares at the valuations my tracker funds do". What we have here is not so much a speculative bubble, for that description implies choice, as an enforced one.

Computer stocks

THERE'S ONE sector where even small companies are the investor's favourite. Executives only have to mention the words information technology and investors start drooling. Not surprisingly, they are cashing in. At least three IT firms – Synstar, Axon and Morse – are at various stages of raising funds. More may follow before the end of the year.

These three companies are all in very different areas of the market, with varying growth rates and prospects. What they all have in common, however, is that they will be capitalised at £300m or less – the small-cap bracket that fund managers have tended to ostracise.

Some firms have good reasons for going public. In a fast-growing industry, they need extra capital to expand and can also use their stock as a currency for acquisitions. A stock market listing also allows companies to offer share options as a way of hanging on to their staff.

Nevertheless, the latest batch may have other motives. Enthusiasm about growing demand for computer services has driven valuations to extreme levels. In some cases this is justified – particularly those with exposure to mobile telephony or electronic commerce. However, others will have a harder time living up to expectations as the IT market slows towards the end of the year.

So the enthusiasm for IT flotations may soon wane. Yesterday's embarrassing debut from Synstar – when the shares dropped 7p below their 165p issue price on the first day's trading – will not have helped. The float appears to be a clear case of CVC, the venture capital group, capitalising on sky-high valuations to make a quick turn on an investment it made only 18 months ago.

With the current batch of IT new issues, it may be that investors are able to pick up the shares at a cheaper price once they have been on the market for a few months.

Court ruling on cancer claims boosts Gallaher

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

GALLAHER, the cigarette group expected to announce only modest profits growth next week, was for a time the top Footsie constituent as the High Court dismissed 46 cancer and smoking claims.

The shares were puffed up 25p to 445p, only 15p below their all-time high. Then in volatile late trading, enthusiasm was almost stubbed out before the shares recovered some of their firmness and ended 17.5p higher at 437.5p. The 46 cases were also dismissed against the other leading British cigarette group, Imperial Tobacco, which suffered something of a rebuff, edging ahead only 4p to 731p.

The High Court decision did not come as a surprise and the shares of the two cigarette producers have enjoyed increasing stock market support. Blue-blooded stockbroker Cazenove yesterday joined the buy chorus.

It is widely believed that the High Court decision will discourage much further action against the two groups and will strengthen the investment appeal of Gallaher and Imps.

British American Tobacco, operating overseas and not a direct beneficiary of the judgment, firmed 6.5p to 569.5p.

SIGNET HELD at 40.75p as BT Alex.Brown lifted its profits forecast by 6 per cent to £87m and the analyst John Richards suggested the shares should hit 60p. In its revamped form, the former Ratners gets nearly 75 per cent of its profits from the US and is probably the most successful British retailer in America. Four years ago the shares slumped to 12p; last year they touched 51p.

Gallaher is one of 12 Footsie companies on next week's reporting schedule. BT Alex.Brown is looking for a 2 per cent gain to £320m.

During a another busy session, leading equities on several occasions tried to rally. For a time Footsie moved hesitantly into positive territory but the index ended 31.4 points lower at 6,175.1.

Supporting shares, however, were again more confident. The mid cap index rose 22.2 to 5,248.3 and the small cap 6 to 2,277.3.

An indecisive New York display was the major influence. All the other factors that pushed Footsie to a peak during the week, such as Tony Blair's euro signal and the flow of steady company profits, were quietly forgotten.

Railtrack, where the chairman Sir Robert Horton is retiring, was back on the express line, advancing 77p to 1,552p in further response to the rail summit and the company's confident projections.

Alliance & Leicester, the former building society, was the major Footsie casualty, off 50.5p to 840.5p following uninspiring results.

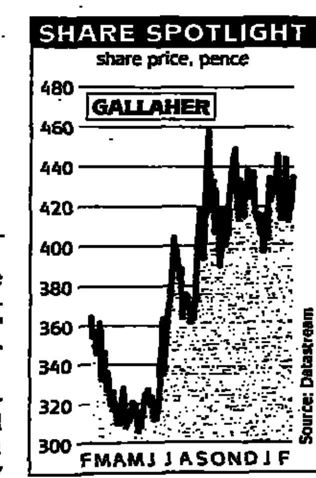
British Aerospace lost 23.5p to 396.5 as worries about its Saudi Arabia contracts refused to fade, and Glaxo Wellcome gave up 75p to 1,991p on its US flu drug rejection.

Retailers continued to edge higher as investors took the view that the sector's recession was coming to an end.

Marks & Spencer firmed a further 4.75p to 419.75p following its management shake-up, although BT Alex.Brown wondered whether the group "fully understood its problems".

Arcadia, half of the Burton split, rose 31p to 208.5p as a large stock overhang was apparently cleared. An agency cross of 2.3 million shares at 187p, then a premium to the market price, inspired the surge.

The shares, however, remain in the bargain basement; they topped 500p a year ago.



Storehouse, where vague takeover gossip has been heard, added 15p to 153p and the department store Selfridges, the subject of a British Land build-up, improved 15p to 239p. Among the depressed retail tiddlers, Era gained 0.5p to 6.75p. The toy shop chain has doubled since July. This week it produced an encouraging profit forecast.

Cadbury Schweppes slipped 15.5p to 957p. According to US reports, it is trying to spend some of its potential cash pile on buying a Hawaiian Punch drinks business from Procter & Gamble, the sprawling detergent and foods group. The deal would cost around £95m.

Although it has no significant confectionery interest in the US – Hershey makes and sells its products under licence – Cadbury is America's third-largest soft drinks maker.

Enterprise Oil, talking merger with Lasmo, rose 16.5p to 269.5p. US buying was said to be responsible.

Some of the high-flying computer shares took a tumble. Guardian IT accompanied higher profits with share sales by one of its venture capitalist backers and by directors and management. The price fell 30p to 617.5p. ITnet lost 53.5p to 425.5p although profits rose 44 per cent.

Waste Recycling, suspended at 456p for the takeover of 3C, returned to market, ending at 500.5p. The group, headed by David Williams, has grown rapidly; it was worth £8.3m five years ago and after the latest deal is capitalised at more than £500m.

Atlantic Telecom's expansion into Northern England from its Scottish base added a further 30p to 202.5p, but Filtronic, a maker of telecom bits and pieces, fell 26p to 797.5p as investors moved to take profits in some of the telecom shares.

Airtech, a mobile communications group, improved 4.5p to 38.5p after agreeing a share exchange offer, said to be worth 41.9p a share, from Remec, a US group.

DEALINGS ARE due to resume on Monday in shares of Scotswood Industries, a sedate engineering group which has transformed itself through a reverse takeover. It acquired Midas, which has a transport data communication system, and sold its existing engineering businesses to their management. The Midas deal was clinched with the shares priced at 10p.

Rumours of corporate action boosted Zetters, the bingo and pools group which has made no secret that it is examining its future. The shares rose 13p to 126.5p. The company has indicated it may be split into two, with separate deals concluded for its bingo and pools businesses. There is also the possibility of new management being injected and presumably a reverse takeover.

Swan Hill, a construction group where bid talks are going on, put on 6p to 66p, and Hampden, an Irish do-it-yourself chain where J Sainsbury sits on 29.2 per cent, improved 5.5p to 45.5p.

Calluna, the electronics group which has banked on its Hardwall computer security system, continued to retreat after the surprise profits warning. The shares fell a further 1.5p to 15.5p. They started Tuesday at 27p.

SEAQ VOLUME: 1 billion
SEAQ TRADES: 84,986
GILTS INDEX: n/a

Vaux chairman set to step down

BY NIGEL COPE
Associate City Editor



Sir Paul Nicholson had been expected to stay on to ensure boardroom stability

SIR PAUL NICHOLSON is expected to step down as chairman of the beleaguered Vaux brewing group in the next few weeks.

Vaux, which yesterday changed its name to Swallow Group, had previously suggested that Sir Paul would stay on at the Sunderland company to ensure some boardroom stability after the dramatic ousting of its chief executive and finance director earlier this month. They left after a row over plans to sell its two breweries to a management buyout team.

However, it is believed he will step down soon and that the company has a shortlist of two potential replacements.

The sale of the group's Sunderland and Sheffield breweries and the tenanted pub estate to Sir Paul's brother Frank for an estimated £70m is close to an agreement.

Frank Nicholson's four-week exclusive negotiating period runs out on Monday but he has asked for an extension to bring the deal to fruition and this is likely to be granted.

Sir Paul may step down before the shareholders' meeting to approve the brewery sale. Private investors in Sunderland are understood to be unhappy about the alleged £20m gap between the price being paid by Frank Nicholson and the possible price that could have been achieved by closure and sale of the assets. Angry exchanges are expected and local observers say Sir Paul may prefer to retire early rather than face a hostile audience in the closing days of his 22-year reign as chairman.

The change of the company's name to Swallow Group follows a resolution at its annual meeting in January. The change follows the decision to sell the brewing and tenanted pubs operations and concentrate on the Swallow Hotels operations.

Vaux has been viewed as a takeover target with the highly regarded Swallow chain seen as the most valuable asset.

Whitbread and Bass have been tipped as the most likely bidders as both are keen to expand their leisure interests. Ladbroke has previously looked at the company but its £1.2bn takeover of Stakis last month has effectively ruled it out.

Synstar shares slip on their first day

BY PETER THAL LARSEN

SYNSTAR, the computer services group, suffered an embarrassing stock market debut yesterday when shares in the company slipped below their issue price on their first day of trading.

The fall comes after Synstar and its financial advisers, Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, came in for intense criticism for the way they handled the flotation.

Shares in Synstar, trading on a when-issued basis, closed at 158p, 7p below the price at which they were sold to institutional shareholders. This fall was despite the shares being priced at the lower end of the 155p-185p range indicated by Synstar in its prospectus.

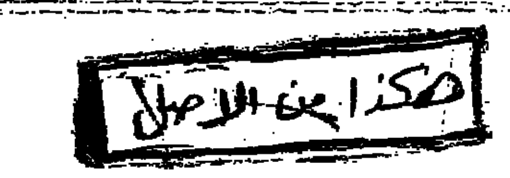
Analysts said Synstar, which was bought by its management from the leisure and hotel group Granada in September 1997, was coming to the market before it had established a track record. They also accused CVC Capital Partners, the venture capital group which backed the buyout, of demanding too high a price.

At a share price of 158p Synstar, which raised £90.5m in new capital from the flotation, is capitalised at £257m. At the time of the management buyout it was valued at just £89m.

Meanwhile, Morgan Stanley came under fire for refusing to send information on the flotation to City analysts. Experts who have seen Synstar's prospectus have raised questions about the company's depreciation policies and possible liabilities arising from the millennium computer bug.

"The whole float has been handled in a shabby way," one analyst said yesterday. "It's made everybody very suspicious and you can see that in the share price reaction."

Outlook, this page



SPORT

Boxing: Losing streak of British fighters against American opponents can finally be broken by Lennox Lewis

Heavy history of undisputed woe



KEN JONES

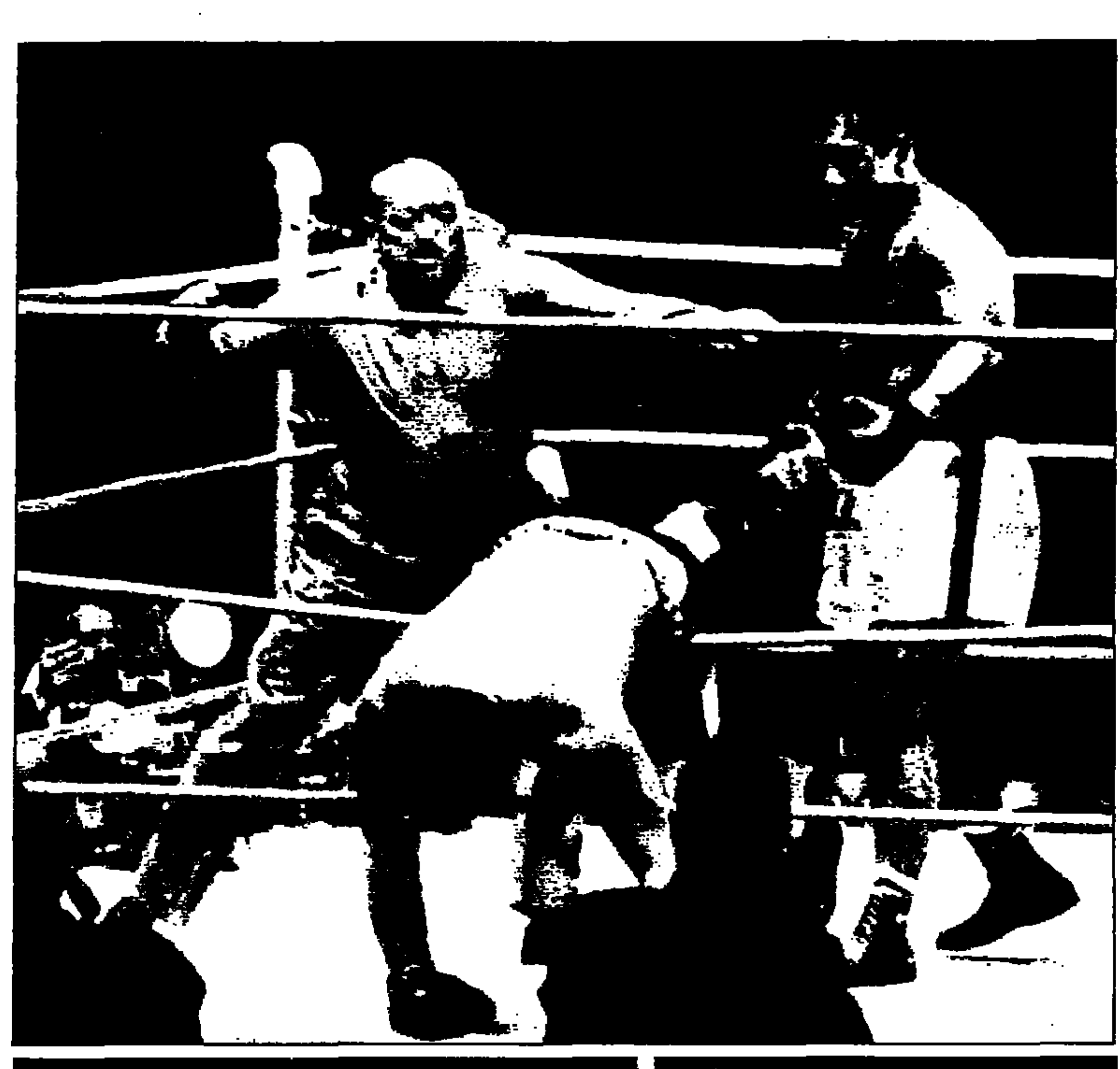
ELEVEN DEFEATS in 11 attempts this century at winning undisputed championships explain American contempt for British heavyweight boxing. Even the sport's most revered scribe, the late A J Liebling, could not resist a whimsical jibe, writing that, whenever one of our big men was in for the title, British reporters were scared to retrieve a dropped pencil at ringside for fear of missing the fight.

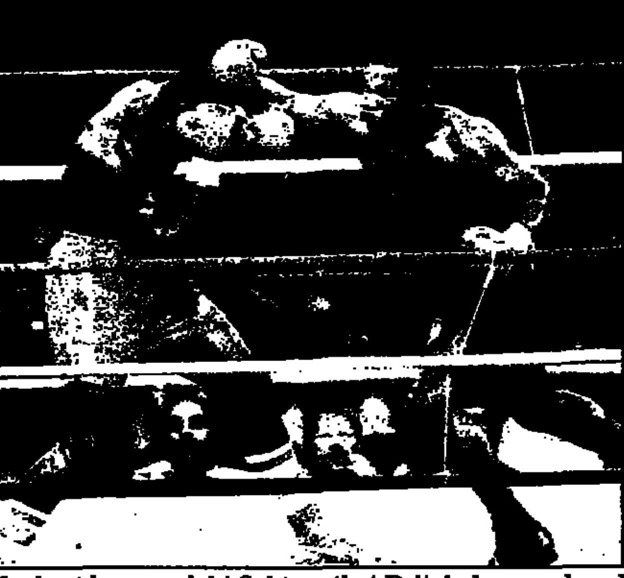
When Lennox Lewis takes on Evander Holyfield in New York in two weeks' time he will be hoping to end a sorry tale of British disappointment and crushed ambition which goes back to December 1907, when Noah Brusso, a squat French-Canadian who had taken Tommy Burns as his fighting name, retained the only acknowledged version of the heavyweight championship with a 10th-round knockout against Gunner Moir at the National Sporting Club in London.

What Burns lacked in size – he stood only 5ft 7in and weighed in around the light-heavyweight mark of 175lb – he made up for with an aggressive style that quickly accounted for the three other British hopefuls, all within five rounds.

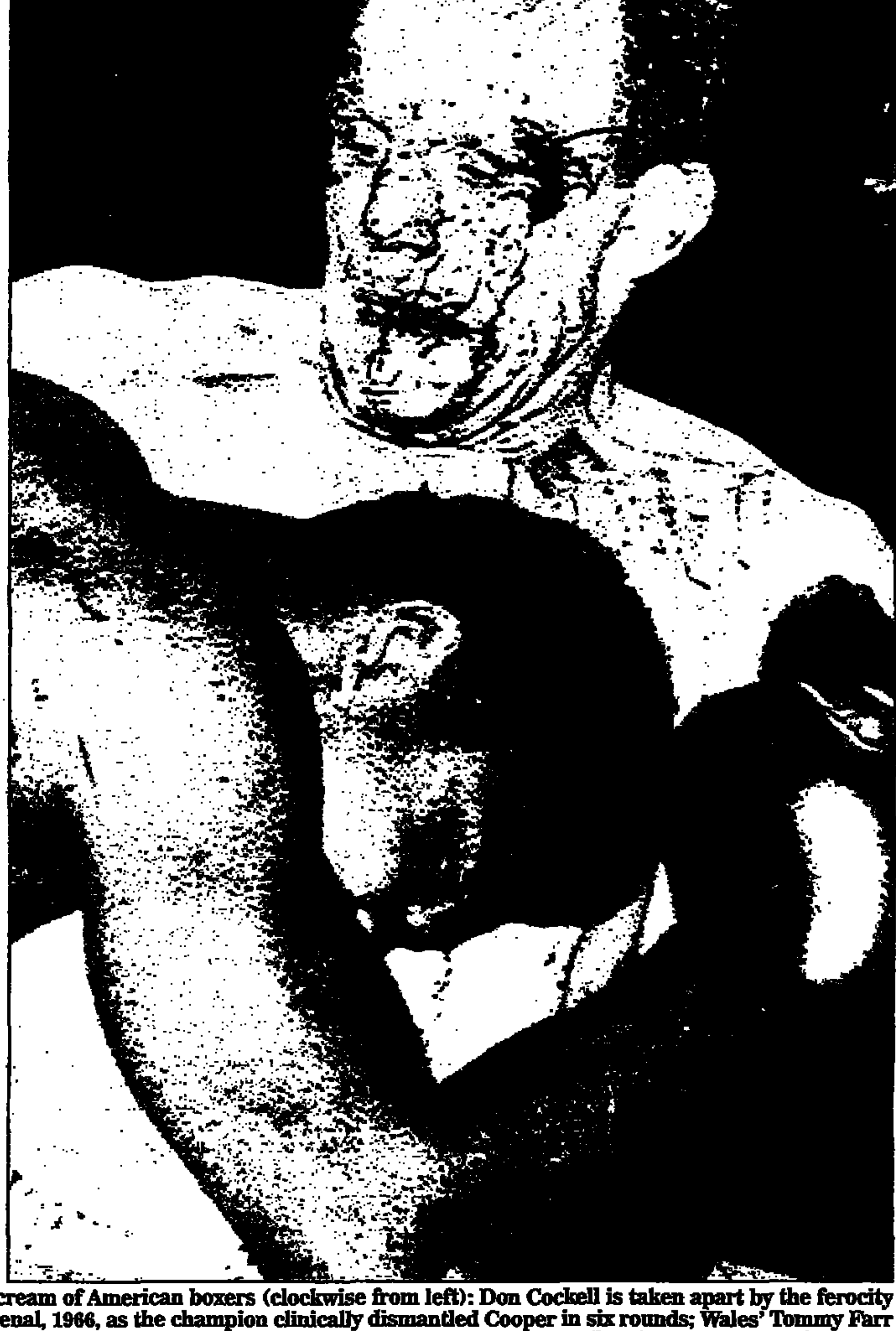
History's denigration of Burns as a man on the run from Jack Johnson, who flatted him at Rushcutter's Bay in Sydney, is unfair. As the first truly international champion, prepared to take on anyone who could find a backer, Burns took the title to England, France, Ireland and Australia.

The second of his British victims, Jack Palmer, lasted only four rounds at Wonderland in London. Barely more than a month later, on 17 March 1908, Jem Roche (Ireland was then still a part of the United Kingdom) lasted less than a round in Dublin. When Jewey Smith went over in the fifth round of a challenge to Burns in Paris, it would be 29 years before another British heavyweight fought for the undisputed title.









The best heavyweight fighters that Britain has produced this century have fared poorly against the cream of American boxers (clockwise from left): Don Cockell is taken apart by the ferocity of Rocky Marciano in San Francisco, 1955; Muhammad Ali takes a bloody toll of Henry Cooper at Arsenal, 1966, as the champion clinically dismantled Cooper in six rounds; Wales' Tommy Farr takes Joe Louis the distance before losing on points in New York, 1937; Mike Tyson savages Frank Bruno on the way to a five-round win in Las Vegas, 1989 *Daily Mirror/Allsport/Topham Pics*

By then British heavyweights had become a standing (or prostrate if you prefer) joke in American boxing circles, personified by Phaintin' Phil Scott, who lost a chance of going in against the new undisputed champion, Joe Louis, when he cried "foul" once too often in an eliminator against Jack Sharkey.

Exasperated by Scott's antics, the New York boxing impresario Mike Jacobs sought another "safe" opponent for Louis's first defence. The choice fell upon Tommy Farr, a durable but light-punching Welshman whose reputation had soared with victories over Ben Foord (for the British and Empire titles), the former world champion Max Baer, and Walter Neusel of Germany.

Born and raised in the Welsh coalfields, so desperate for betterment that he once walked to London seeking work, Farr had fought his first 10-rounder at just 13 years old and been hardened by booth boxing.

An odd contradiction, both tough and a romantic, Farr's epic stand over 15 rounds, against a man who many would come to regard as one of the greatest heavyweight champions established him as a hero of British sport. On the night of the contest a huge bonfire blazed on the mountainside near Farr's home village, Clydach Vale, and many thousands throughout Britain, their attention held like no other sports event before, gathered around radio sets for the BBC's blow-by-blow commentary.

In reality, Louis was a clear winner but Farr's stubborn resistance temporarily altered America's sneering perception. Remarking many years later on the difficulties he found with Farr's crouching style and unexpectedly good counter-punching, Louis thought the first of his defences to be one of the most difficult. "Maybe I was fooled by what people said before the fight," he later said, "that Tommy wasn't up to it and would run from me."

To this day there are people who believe Farr was robbed at Yankee Stadium in New York but the amiable Welshman never claimed to have done enough. "The very mention of Louis's (he pronounced it Louey) name still makes my nose bleed," he would chuckle. "The morning after the fight it felt as though I had been hit by a truck."

If Farr was given little chance against Louis, even less hope was held for Don Cockell when he met Rocky Marciano in San Francisco in May 1955. A blown-up light-heavyweight (the description is particularly appropriate in Cockell's case because of the glandular disorder that gave him a bloated look even when in peak condition), he took a fearful pounding from the most ruthless heavyweight champion in history, and the only one to retire undefeated.

The BBC's fight commentator, Eamonn Andrews, was shocked by the viciousness of Marciano's repeated fouling. "Marciano is one of the toughest champions who ever rubbed a foot in resin," he said, "but he has never read the rule book. He played a different sport from the one Cockell was taught. He butted unmercifully, he hit with his elbows, he hit low. A British referee would have sent him back to his corner after three rounds."

In agony from a kidney-punch in the first round, Cockell was also hit low, head-butted, struck three times after the bell and while down. And yet the referee Frankie Brown did not issue a solitary caution. Remarkably, showing immense courage, Cockell, a former blacksmith from Battersea in London, went nine rounds before Brown stopped the contest.

The British Boxing Board thought so little of Brian London's prospects against Floyd Patterson in 1959 that it ordered him not to take the contest and subsequently imposed a fine of £1,100 for defiance. London, from West Hartlepool, had emulated his father, Jack, in becoming British heavyweight champion but he was not equipped to provide Patterson with more than a work-out before going over in the 11th round.

One punch, a left hook, resurrected Henry Cooper's ailing career and turned him into a folk hero. Light by modern heavyweight standards, Cooper had eight defeats on his 36-fight professional record when he was matched with the colourful contender Cassius Clay at Wembley Stadium in June 1963. Cut-prone, Cooper was already leaking blood when he dropped Clay just before the bell to end the fourth round.

A mysteriously split glove gave Clay time in which to clear his head and 75 seconds later Cooper was a gory wreck, his face so savaged by Clay's slashing punches that horrified ringsiders screamed for the contest to be stopped.

However, the memory of that one blow encouraged Cooper's supporters to believe he was in with a shout when challenging Clay (by then Muhammad Ali) for the undisputed championship at the Arsenal football ground in May 1966.

Ali's third defence, after taking the title from Sonny Liston and beating him in a re-match, proved to be an anti-climax. Taking no chances with the natural power in Cooper's left arm, Ali ripped into the Londoner's fragile features to win on a sixth-round stoppage.

Barely two months later, shortly after England defeated West Germany in the 1966 World Cup final, Ali gave London his second shot at the title. A gross mis-match, it lasted only three rounds. "Ooh, he's quick," a bemused London muttered in his corner after the session.

The Hungarian-born Joe Bugnér had almost all it takes to be a world champion – impressive build, strength and courage – all but efficiency in punching and, most importantly, desire. Ali's third defence of the championship he sensationally regained from George Foreman was against Bugner in Kuala Lumpur on 1 July 1975.

Again (he had been earlier outpointed by Ali in a non-title bout) Bugner could not stir himself sufficiently to give the champion a problem. "At least Phil Scott fainted," an American observer said.

When a Yorkshire born ex-paratrooper, Richard Dunn, was brought forward to challenge Ali for the title in Munich on 25 May 1976, the tale of the tape showed that he was at least a match for Ali in physical dimensions. An American television commentator thought them to look about equal. "Yeah, from the ankles down," somebody else said. Utterly outclassed, sent over five times, Dunn was stopped in the sixth round.

Frank Bruno's elevation to the status of heavyweight contender was a masterpiece of promotion. With his sculpted frame and a record beefed up by astute matchmaking, Bruno looked the part and would eventually become the World Boxing Association champion, but he lacked the instinct for surviving a crisis. This was already clear from violent losses to James "Bonecrusher" Smith and Tim Witherspoon when holding a points advantage, and it left Bruno vulnerable to the terrible force of Mike Tyson's punching when they came together for the undisputed title in Las Vegas on 25 May 1989.

With hindsight, Tyson was on the slide that would lead to a sensational defeat by James "Buster" Douglas but he was still far too powerful for Bruno, who actually shook the champion with a hook in the first round. The plan was for Bruno to make it a rough fight, as Holyfield did in the two contests that finally exposed Tyson's limitations.

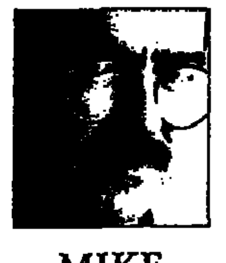
It did not work. Deducted a point for a foul blow, Bruno failed to win a round and was being battered on the ropes when the referee, Richard Steele, called a halt in the fifth.

Self-serving fragmentation of the heavyweight championship masks a rarity of the contest between Lewis and Holyfield at Madison Square Garden in New York: Lewis, the World Boxing Council title-holder against Holyfield, who brings the World Boxing Association and International Boxing Federation belts. As Don King puts it: "for the unmitigated, unadulterated, undisputed heavyweight crown."

A CENTURY OF BRITISH ATTEMPTS TO WIN THE UNDISPUTED WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE

Date	Fight	Result
2.12.07	**Tommy Burns v Gunner Moir** *(NSC, London)*	KO 10th
10.2.08	**Tommy Burns v Jack Palmer** *(Wonderland, London)*	KO 4th
17.3.08	**Tommy Burns v Jem Roche** *(Dublin)*	KO 1st
18.4.08	**Tommy Burns v Jewey Smith** *(Paris)*	KO 5th
3.8.37	**Joe Louis v Tommy Farr** *(New York)*	Pts 15th
16.5.55	**Rocky Marciano v Don Cockell** *(San Francisco)*	TKO 9th
1.5.59	**Floyd Patterson v Brian London** *(Indianapolis)*	KO 11th
2.5.66	**Muhammad Ali v Henry Cooper** *(Arsenal, London)*	TKO 6th
6.8.66	**Muhammad Ali v Brian London** *(Earls Court, London)*	KO 3th
1.7.75	**Muhammad Ali v Joe Bugner** *(Kuala Lumpur)*	Pts 15th
25.5.76	**Muhammad Ali v Richard Dunn** *(Munich)*	TKO 5th
25.5.89	**Mike Tyson v Frank Bruno** *(Las Vegas)*	TKO 5th

Misnomers, sunken launches and rank stupidity



MIKE ROWBOTTOM

HE WAS a nice man. A very very nice man. And he was telling me all about the investment which had turned his family business into one of the country's leading leisure resorts.

Seventy-five years earlier his great-grandfather, Herbert Potter, had established Britain's first holiday camp. But that, he explained with a darkening countenance, was then, and this was now. In recent years, he added, they'd built a theatre, a gym and an indoor bowling venue. Work had started on the construction of a hotel. So they were, absolutely and definitively, not running a holiday camp. They were running a leisure centre, and any idea that it was still a holiday camp, just because it had coachloads of holidaymakers arriving, was very wide of the mark and unwelcome. So no references to holiday camps please.

Hosting the World Bowls Championships last month was perceived by all at Potter's Leisure Resort as another step towards the bright new dawn. It was unfortunate that Steve Rider, introducing BBC TV coverage of the event, should mention the "h" and "c" words.

It was also unfortunate that one paper – this one, actually – should employ the phrase "Hi-di-hi" in a headline.

But then, what did they really expect? And what's wrong with being a holiday camp? As a small exercise in attempted news management, this was not an outstanding success. But then it is a tricky area.

A few years ago, in an effort to revamp its fading image and appeal to the young, the British Athletic Federation (now deceased) held a press launch – on a river launch.

As we bobbed on the Thames, the new scheme was explained to us. It was a ranking system, sponsored by TSB bank, which would evaluate athletic performances on an overall points basis, to create a picture of who were the best British athletes in absolute terms.

Hungarian scoring tables, of the type used to convert decathlon performances into points, were to be employed. It was an anorak's wet dream, but as a torch-lighting new venture... well, doubts were swiftly expressed.

The smile on the face of the BAF's executive chairman, Professor Peter Radford, became strained. He turned to the man on his left, Roger Black, observing with some levity that, as things stood, Black was only Britain's second-best 400 metres runner and was trailing well behind some of the hurdlers and javelin throwers – in absolute terms, of course.

Presumably, Black was then expected to say how he would redouble his efforts in order to see his name rise proudly up the TSB rankings. Black, however, was not amused. His response was brief and, for the purposes of the bright new dawn, unhelpful. Stick it up your rankings, in effect.

What, someone then asked, was the structure of prize money for this new scheme? It was explained that there was no prize money. As such. At all. At which point the TSB rankings launch, already holed below the waterline, became dead in the water.

Among other doomed launches I cherish in my memory was the techno-music fashion show put on in the stupendously unsuitable setting of Bisham Abbey to publicise England team kit and leisurewear spin-offs for the 1994 World Cup finals. Which, as you may recall, England failed to reach.

When I recall the bright young things gyrating under the ancient beams in their bright young things – manufactured courtesy of Far East sweated labour – I almost feel glad England didn't make it.

Alongside misconceived initiatives, doomed attempts at setting the media agenda figure prominently in my own personal ranking list.

Graeme Le Saux's scornful defiance of a five-minute interview limit imposed during a Chelsea press conference before last season's Littlewoods Cup final, raised him high in the estimation of myself and a number of colleagues present.

Strenuous, and fruitless, efforts were also made in an attempt to stop questioners looking beyond the weekend's final to the European Cup-Winners' Cup final the next week. But, for wishful thinking, you couldn't beat the US Olympic Committee, which set up a press conference with ice skater Tonya Harding before the 1994 Winter Games with the proviso that no questions were to be asked about her alleged role in a pre-Games hammer attack that left her rival, Nancy Kerrigan, with an injured knee. It was like expecting Basil Fawlty not to mention the war.

In preparation for the expected media onslaught, someone had provided Harding with a standard response: "That is not an appropriate question." Glory be, it was as an umbrella in the face of a tidal wave.

Gloucester's Gaul is the healer

That infamous Kingsholm spirit is primed for a revival under Saint-Andre.

By Chris Hewett

THEY STILL exist, those die-hard Kingsholm traditionalists who regard a meal out in Cheltenham as dangerously cosmopolitan and arm themselves with a passport before venturing into the Forest of Dean. You can find them on any Saturday match afternoon, gathered together at the back of the Shed with their Cherry and White shirts, their effigies of François Pienaar and Will Carling and their rose-tinted memories of Teagey, Gaddy, Burto and Fids.

"Glaaasterrr," they holler in the time-honoured fashion. "Never mind the ball, lads, get on with the game."

But even they are beginning to get the modern message, to grow used to the idea of a team inhabited by New Zealanders, Australians and Samoans as well as home-reared hardnuts from Matson, Coney Hill and Longlevens. They have seen Steve Ojomoh, once a Bath man through and through, cross the West Country Rubicon to elbow Simon Devereux, a rough-and-ready handful from the local Spartans club, out of the first-choice back row. They have witnessed the emergence of Terry Fanolua, a South Sea Islander, as a popular folk hero in the grand manner of Dick Smith, Johnny Watkins and Digger Morris. Apart from Londoners, who remain far beyond the pale, Kingsholm now welcomes all-comers.

Which is why the sudden and wholly unexpected appointment of Philippe Saint-Andre as club coach does not quite signify the end of the world as we know it. Saint-Andre may have landed in the Cotswolds from Planet France and he may communicate many of his ideas via a heavily personalised form of Gallic semaphore, but his instinctive grasp of rugby's abstractions – honour, pride, togetherness, *esprit de corps* – allows him to speak Gloucester's language without necessarily knowing the lingo. Having won the hearts of the Kingsholm faithful over the past 23 months, the capture of their minds should, in theory at least, be a piece of gâteau.

But then, Saint-Andre's immediate predecessor also oozed passion and commitment from every pore and those honest to goodness qualities failed to save Richard Hill from the bum's rush treatment. Hill was sacked a little under a fortnight ago, not just because he had failed to cement a place in the top six of the Allied Dunbar Premiership, but because a side assumed to be the closest-knit unit in English rugby had simply stopped playing, either for him or for each other. The reason? Well, that remains a mystery, not least to Hill himself.





Dave Sims (left), the captain who embodies the Cherry and White ethic, and Philippe Saint-Andre, the Frenchman charged with satisfying the Shed's ardour *Empics*

There was a degree of resentment, inside the playing squad as well as on the terraces, at the coach's proactive role in shipping Phil Greening, another born-and-bred Spartan, out to Sale. In addition, Hill's relationship with Dave Sims, the club captain, grew uneasy to the extent that Sims was widely and authoritatively rumoured to be considering a move to Bristol. But any suggestion of a dressing-room split along geographical lines – the Gloucester boys against the imports – is wide of the mark. True, Neil McCarthy, the former Bath hooker who recently supplanted Greening as England's official number two No 2, expressed his surprise and sadness at Hill's demise, but a number of local products were also close to the coach and have privately questioned the wisdom of terminating his contract.

Sims, the 29-year-old one-club lock who embodies the Gloucester ethic more completely than any Cherry and White forward since Mike Teague, maintains a diplomatic silence on the subject of Hill's departure, but he openly accepts that the Kingsholm faithful have been short-changed throughout the course of a deeply disappointing campaign. "We've been playing as individuals and that worries me, because it has never been our way," he said this week. "Somehow, somewhere, we've lost some of the spirit that always drew us close together and made us strong.

"It's difficult to put a finger on the reasons why, but we haven't been a real team for quite a while; not in the Gloucester sense, anyway. Whenever we found ourselves in trouble in the past, perhaps having to win a game to stay clear of relegation or up against it in a cup match against quality opposition, there was a togetherness that always took us through. There was never any fear, any panic. We just knew that on a big Saturday afternoon at Kingsholm, we could mix it with the very best and get a result. Right now, that confidence isn't there. We need to find it again."

> *'Philippe understands how essential it is to get us playing as a team, as a 15, once more. He has a tremendous amount to offer'*

The spiritual fall has indeed been precipitate. Six months ago Gloucester were one of the coming sides; their abject away form would prevent them staking a meaningful claim for the title, of course, but they looked practically unbeatable on their own rectangle of blood-stained mud. After all, Sims and six of his colleagues – four tight forwards plus Ojomoh and Scott Benton, the scrum-half – had gone toe to toe and claw to claw with a variety of crack New Zealand teams during the summer and emerged not only with a full complement of limbs, but with reputations enhanced. It should have been the making of them. So what happened?

"Good question," replies Sims, whose own Test performances against the All Blacks in Auckland and the Springboks in Cape Town were among the few stomachable English contributions on that grisly expedition. "I think perhaps a few of us felt a bit low, a little disappointed, at not making the England squad for the autumn internationals. Between us, we did a job for our country in pretty difficult circumstances and we felt we deserved some communication from the selectors, if nothing else. But that's not an excuse for some of our recent performances at club level. We all learned a tremendous amount during the tour, but we haven't made it count. We have to look at ourselves and ask the reasons why."

If the required solutions were beyond Hill's grasp, can Saint-Andre hope to come up with the right answers? "Why shouldn't he?" asks Sims. "Philippe has earned the respect he now enjoys here and he's an inspirational figure, both on the field and in the dressing-room. Spirit and commitment have always been important ingredients in French rugby and Philippe understands how essential it is to get us playing as a team, as a 15, once more. To my mind he has a tremendous amount to offer, and I've no doubt that this squad will give him everything he asks."

If ever there was a time to rediscover the musketeerish benefits of the "all for one and one for all" philosophy of rugby, cup quarter-final day is as good a day as any. This afternoon Saint-Andre's Gloucester play their first game in anger against the hated Harlequins, whose Premiership victory at Kingsholm a fortnight ago ran down the curtain on Hill's bold attempt to bring the old Cherry and White dinosaur into the 20th century before the dawning of the 21st.

"The whole city will turn out for this one," say Sims, who starts the match on the bench, under a rotation system designed to keep he and his fellow locks, Rob Fidler and Mark Cornwell, in gainful employment. "Quins have made a habit of coming down here and turning us over and it's getting on our nerves a bit. We have a lot to prove, both to ourselves and our supporters.

"Philippe can help us do that, but only if we help him. A few signs of the old togetherness would be a start."

Cotton is poised to take key role again

FRAN COTTON could return as a major figure in English rugby if his Reform Group pushes through a vote of no confidence in the current Rugby Football Union Management Board.

Cotton's aim is to oust the Management Board and return as the head of an emergency board, along with another former England captain, Bill Beaumont.

Cotton, the president of the Reform Group and a former England captain and Lions' manager, resigned as the vice-chairman of the RFU Management Board last April. Now the reformers have called a special general meeting that will attack Brian Baister's board and call for them to quit. Only the RFU president Peter Trunkfield and its new chief executive Francis Baron are excepted to escape the reformers' axe.

Also heading for the exit door are England's International Rugby Board representatives, John Jeavons-Fellows and Malcolm Phillips.

The Reform Group accuses the board of "crass management, lurching from crisis to crisis and bringing the game into ridicule and disrepute". It has collected the required 100 signatures and hopes for the backing of the majority of the RFU's 2,000 clubs.

Its potential board would comprise Trunkfield, Baron, Cotton, Beaumont and four others to serve until the RFU's July annual general meeting.

Martyn Thomas, the chairman of the Reform Group, has issued a manifesto stating: "The Five Nations fiasco led to people throughout the world to call for heads to roll."

Thomas lists an eight-point criticism: "1, The Board have fought the Five Nations and lost; 2, Fought the IRB and lost; 3, Fallen out with the organisers of the European Cup; 4, Pandered to the owner clubs on League structure, regardless of the Leagues below; 5, Put the financial future of all clubs at risk; 6, Sacrificed the needs of the grass-roots clubs to satisfy a few owners' appetites; 7, Presided over the reduction in numbers playing the game; 8, Brought the game into public ridicule and humiliation."

Thomas added: "We have been let down by the Management Board. Sanity, dignity and decency must be restored. We need leadership and people with vision to sort out the mess, ensure that the game is properly run and not lurching from crisis to crisis.

"We owe it to ourselves to bring the management of the game back to rugby people. This is a sad but historic moment in the annals of rugby.

"Never have the clubs felt such a common aim to seek a special general meeting over the Union's affairs. The request comes from every level of the game below Premiership One, not just the junior clubs."

The plan was to dovetail the meeting with a scheduled special general meeting, called by the RFU in Birmingham on 28 March, which is being asked to approve reforms of the RFU Council and committees.

But the Reform Group request is too late, leading to a later meeting at high cost to the Union's strained coffers.

In Scotland, the Glasgow Hawks coach Iain Russell has urged his team to rediscover their killer instinct or forfeit their chance of winning the Premiership. Hawks face Watsonians at Anniesland for the second time in a fortnight today, with Russell still frustrated in the wake of the 9-9 draw at Myreside.

"It was a very annoying experience for us because of the number of scoring opportunities we threw away. We created enough openings to have won by at least 20 points but we failed to accept any of them," he said. "If the same thing happens this weekend we will almost certainly be out of the running for the championship."

Stransky's injury adds to Tigers' troubles

BY CHRIS HEWETT

STRANSKY FOR England? Just at the moment we do not even have Stransky for Leicester. The South African outside-half at the centre of an increasingly farcical debate over World Cup eligibility – he may be able to find touch, but he cannot find any proof of the existence of an alleged English-born grandfather – has pulled out of this afternoon's Tetley's Bitter Cup quarter-final at Richmond with knee trouble. His withdrawal leaves the Tigers' double ambitions seriously exposed, especially in the light of Austin Healey's on-going brouhaha with the Rugby Football Union.

The loss of Healey, suspended by his club for treading on the face of Kevin Putt during the recent Leicester-London Irish Premiership match, was a serious enough setback in itself, but Stransky's absence has forced the Midlanders into a major back division realignment for their perilous date at the Madejski Stadium. Jamie Hamilton plays at scrum-half, with Pat Howard moving from inside centre to stand-off and Jon Stuart lining up in midfield.

Richmond are themselves a man short in the centre, thanks to Allan Bateman's hamstring problems, but Jason Wright should at least bring some All Black-style physicality to the proceedings. The big New Zealander played for Otago before deciding to take the English shilling at the start of last season and as John Leslie, his fellow "scarfie" from Dunedin, showed at Twickenham last weekend, they know a bit about midfield play down there in the South Island.

Certainly the Reading-based Londoners need something to revive a flagging season. "I expect us to improve significantly on our last performance against Leicester, in the Premiership just over a month ago," said John Kingston, the Richmond coach, yesterday. "In fact, I will be very surprised if that does not happen. Outstanding as the Leicester defence is, I don't think it's impregnable."

Neither is Richmond's, it appears; Leicester put 50 points past Kingston's side in the course of two clear-cut Premiership victories this season. But the wear and tear of fighting a war on three fronts – league, cup and Five Nations – is certain to weaken the Tigers in body, if not in spirit, and the return of a pumped-up Craig Quinnell to the opposition ranks this afternoon is the last thing they want to see.

Tomorrow's ties throw up an intriguing derby between Wasps and London Irish at Loftus Road and another hairy-chested battle for physical supremacy between Newcastle and Saracens, the holders, on Tyneside.

Wasps have gone into reshuffle mode as they continue their pursuit of a second successive Twickenham final: they run Joe Worsley on the open-side flank for the suspended Paul Volley and reintroduce Kenny Logan and Rob Henderson to their back division. There is also a front-row place for Adam Black, who replaces Darren Molloy on the loose head.

But the most intriguing selection, or non-selection, concerns Peter Rogers, who is increasingly being seen by the Welsh as a Five Nations prop in imminent waiting. Rogers came through last week's Wales A victory over Ireland with no ill effects, but Dick Best has given Rob Hardwick the tight-head position for Irish and named Kris Fullman on the bench. If Graham Henry, the Welsh national coach, wanted to see his favourite uncapped prop in action before naming his side to face France in Paris next weekend, Best has done him no favours whatsoever.

Newcastle, far more secure on the pitch than off it these days, would dearly love a shot at a cup semi-final to take their minds off the trauma of Sir John Hall's financial withdrawal from north-east rugby. "We've been a bit shabby in training recently, what with Five Nations commitments and all the uncertainty over our future, but the spirit in the squad is excellent," said Gary Armstrong, their scrum-half. Both sides are likely to go in at full strength, although there is a doubt over Stuart Legg, the Newcastle full-back.

There is no doubt over Jason Leonard, who won his 68th England cap at Twickenham last Saturday. His twisted ankle definitely keeps him out of the Harlequins side for today's tie at Gloucester. That will ease his Andy Deacon's load as he returns for the home side after injury.

Reading ready for change of luck

HOCKEY

BY BILL COLWILL

READING, BACK from their European Indoor challenge last weekend, will feel that they have not had too much going for them in recent weeks.

But home advantage on their water-based pitch might just give them the edge this weekend. However, without their captain Jon Wyatt and Manpreet Kochar, they may still find it tough in today's Premier League fixture against leaders Cannock. Cannock themselves will be without their leading goal-scorer, Bobby Crutchley, who has netted 28 times in 16 league games.

Struggling Hounslow travel to Canterbury today and make the journey across London to Southgate for a cup game tomorrow but will be missing Olympic gold medallist Jon Potter for both encounters.

Reading entertain Canterbury in the quarter-finals of the EHA Cup tomorrow while holders Cannock return home to face the only non-Premier club left in the competition, Lewes.

Division One leaders Surbiton and Chelmsford will be looking to put points on the board before their South African players fly out tomorrow night for the Test series against Australia. Although they only expect to miss games on 7 March they will be tired on their return so it is essential to avoid slipping up tomorrow.

Surbiton are at home to fifth-placed Barford Tigers who have lost their way recently, while Chelmsford entertain newly-promoted Eastcote.

Jane Smith, with six goals in Slough's 8-2 win against Glasgow Western, got the English club champions off to a fine start in the European Indoor Club Championship in Glasgow yesterday. Slough, with a depleted squad, never looked back after Smith gave them the lead in the third minute. Champions Russelsheimer edged home in the other pool match, against CPCS Moscow, 5-4.

Williams in the clear – for now

BASKETBALL

BY RICHARD TAYLOR

DERBY STORM'S England international, Yorick Williams, was yesterday cleared to play in the end-of-season play-offs by a joint appeal panel, but only at the cost of a further suspension hanging over his head until the end of February next year.

Williams, though, will miss the League Trophy final against Manchester Giants in two weeks' time, as will his American team-mate Rico Alderson, who withdrew his appeal and is therefore banned until the end of the season.

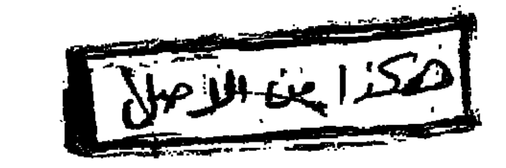
Both were initially banned until the end of the season by the English Basketball Association and Budweiser League for their role in the fighting that forced Derby's game at Chester on 31 January to be abandoned after 28 seconds. Although Williams' appeal was rejected, the suspension was shortened until the end of the regular league season on 5 April. But the appeal panel imposed a five-game ban on Williams, suspended until 29 February next year.

Despite losing their joint leading scorers, fourth-placed Derby are 16 points ahead of the ninth-placed team with nine games left, and are certain of reaching the play-off quarter-finals.

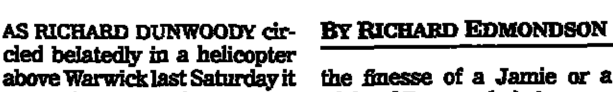
Corey Jackson, of Newcastle Eagles, has replaced Alderson in tonight's North team for the All Star Game against the South at the Newcastle Arena.

The prospect of an away game in front of 8,000 Israelis in Tel Aviv is never to be relished, but England can relax a little for tonight's final European Championship semi-final group game. The gritty 61-56 victory over Belarus at Crystal Palace on Wednesday means that England do not have to pre-qualify for the 2001 Championship, and their coach, Laszlo Nemeth, said: "For once we didn't go soft and melt away."

The same qualities will be needed tonight, when Ian Whyte and Neville Austin replace John Amaechi and Andy Betts.



Earth is ready to get back in hunt



By Richard Edmondson

AS RICHARD DUNWOODY circled belatedly in a helicopter above Warwick last Saturday it was quite appropriate that he should be looking down on the jockey they now know in the weighing room as "the vulture".

Jimmy McCarthy took advantage of Dunwoody's tardy arrival to partner Behrajan to a valuable victory. It was the third Saturday in succession that McCarthy had successfully substituted on horses originally meant for other riders.

The previous week, McCarthy's then friend, Norman Williamson, with whom he shares a house, had succumbed on the morning of the Tote Gold Trophy with a cricked neck and surrendered the winning ride on Decoupage. Seven days earlier, Jamie Osborne had relinquished the seat on the deeply temperamental Him Of Praise at Uttoxeter, allowing "the Saturday boy", as he has also become known, to initiate his run. Punters may now consider a pattern is developing.

RICHARD EDMONDSON
Nap: Earthmover
(Haydock 2.45)
NB: Dr Leunt
(Kempton 4.10)

Him Of Praise returns to the racecourse this afternoon at Haydock, for the Greenalls Grand National Trial, and Osborne has again allowed his No 2 at Oliver Sherwood's Upper Lambourn yard to grapple with the gelding's idiosyncrasies.

"Jamie says he's missed the wedding and he doesn't want to attend the funeral," Sherwood said yesterday. "He could have ridden him but he doesn't want to break up a winning partnership.

"This run has been good for Jimmy and his confidence and, while he's never going to have the finesse of a Jamie or a Richard Dunwoody, he's a perfectly good understudy and he'll do the job if given the chance."

This afternoon's assignment is hardly the easiest of tasks either as Him Of Praise regularly gives the impression of being part of an equine care-in-the-community programme. "The horse can be a bit of a monkey," Sherwood concedes, "but he does tend to come to himself at this time of the year. He's got the ability to win."

Lord Gyllene, the 1997 National winner, will not be among those trying to prevent that eventuality as the soft ground means he misses the race. There are other dangers, however.

Eudipe, who has enticed Tony McCoy to Lancashire, will be foremost among them as he also represents the Martin Pipe stable which has been so fortunate at this circuit. The seven-year-old was ridden quite beautifully to victory by the champion jockey at Sandown last time, but the two-legged part of the operation was subsequently banned for use of the whip. The way things are going, McCoy may make a stop locally and swap his baton for Ken Dodd's tickling stick.

General Wolfe, the topweight in this the richest handicap chase of the season thus far, won here on his reappearance but then scrambled his cells at Uttoxeter. It should pay to wait to see if they have fallen back into place.

The most interesting contestant is EARTHMOVER (nap 2.45). He won the Foxhunters' Chase at the Cheltenham Festival with some facility almost 12 months ago, but has since failed to complete over far easier courses. It may be that these demanding obstacles will again concentrate the mind. It is worth remembering that on one set of statistics at least, the former hunter-chaser is still considered the superior of Teeton Mill and Double Thriller.

If Him Of Praise is the monkey at Haydock then the gorilla colony is formed by Quixall Crossett and Monaughty Man in the preceding contest. Both are trained by Ted Caine and both are useless.

Quixall's unblemished (by victory that is) record is composed of 84 runs and no wins. Monaughty Man has managed one success in 43 runs, but, if anything, he boasts the poorer recent form. He was pulled up on his first four outings this season, and also put his hooves in the air at Ayr last time. If you back either of these horses, you are very fortunate to have betting facilities in your compound.

Over at Kempton, one of the leading primates is Pridwell, who brings his enigmatic tendencies to the Rendlesham Hurdle. More reliable here is **Ocean Hawk** (4.40).

The Sunbury card is poorly populated considering the goodies on offer and the Racing Post Chase is hardly a stampede with just nine runners going to post. Challenger Du Luc flies the flag for the equine barmy in the feature contest, and he cannot be supported while there is a course-and-distance winner at the top of his form in the field. Be sensible on a day of madness and back **Dr Leunt** (next best 4.10).



King's Banker and Mick Fitzgerald clear the last fence from Native Player on the way to an impressive success at Kempton yesterday *Julian Herbert/Allsport*

Banker's Remittance reminder

NICK HENDERSON notched his half-century for the season at Kempton yesterday as King's Banker, carrying the colours of one of the trainer's best chasers, Remittance Man, took the Manor Novices' Chase.

The eight-year-old put in a convincing round of fencing under Mick Fitzgerald and had seven lengths in hand of Native Player at the line. According to Henderson, whose best season came in 1986-87 with 67 winners, the similarity between King's Banker and Remittance Man does not stop at their owner, Tim Collins.

"This horse was desperately unlucky last year and was a bit like Remittance Man," he said. "Remittance Man was unlucky and it took me nearly two years to win a hurdle race with him.

"This horse is entered in the Royal & SunAlliance but he could run in the National Hunt Chase. He jumped well and he travelled well.

Fitzgerald missed his remaining two rides after aggravating a neck injury in a fall from Call My Guest in the handicap hurdle, but expects to ride today.

Julies Jewel will make an ambitious assault on the Triumph Hurdle after springing a surprise on his jumping debut at Market Rasen. The 25-1 chance, trained a few yards from the track by Michael Chapman, showed great tenacity to land the juvenile hurdle.

Julies Jewel has been a regular on the all-weather circuit this winter. "We all backed him today – we thought he had a good chance," Chapman said. "It's not often that you can say a horse has been prepared for the Triumph Hurdle by running on the all-weather.

■ Satellite, digital and selected cable subscribers will be able to enjoy every race at the Cheltenham Festival. The 4 Extra channel will screen all 20 races from the meeting, as well as showing reviews of the previous day's action from 6am.

■ The Cheltenham Festival entry The Outback Way has been purchased by the Winning Line for an undisclosed sum and transferred to Venetia Williams's stable. The nine-year-old has scored three times this season for David Wintle and holds entries in the Mildmay Of Flete and Grand Annual Chases.

LINGFIELD

HYPERION
1.35 Melody Queen 2.10 Forty Forte 2.40 Aljaz 3.15 Refuse To Lose 3.45 Lycian 4.20 Malchik

GOING: Standard.
STALLS: Inside except 1m – outside.
DRAW ADVANTAGE: Low best up to 1m, especially for 6f.
■ Equitrack surface; left-hand, sharp undulating course.
■ Course is SE of town on B2028. Lingfield station (served by London, Victoria) adjoins course. ADMISSION: One enclosure £10. CAR PARK: Club £3; remainder free.

FIVE-YEAR STATISTICS
■ LEADING TRAINERS: G L Moore 94-681 (13.8%), R Hannon 49-379 (12.9%), M Johnston 48-282 (17%), G Kelleway 45-329 (13.7%).
■ LEADING JOCKEYS: A Clark 78-614 (12.7%), J Weaver 69-314 (22%), S Sanders 65-563 (11.5%), R Cochrane 57-353 (16.1%).
■ FAVOURITES: 745-2210 (33.7%).
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: None.

1.35 TAURUS CLAIMING STAKES (CLASS F) £2,750 added 3YO 1m

1 10-342 MELODY QUEEN (14) (BF) K Burke 9 4 ....N Callan (5) 5
2 40-612 THOMAS HENRY (4) (C) J S Moore 9 3 ....P P Murphy (3) 4
3 -25614 SHABAASH (4) (C) P Howling 8 13 ....J Quinn 3
4 1-1652 DREAM ON ME (16) (CD) G L Moore 8 8 ....J Fanning 7
5 00-4 SKY STORM (5) B Meehan 8 8 ....G Hannon (7) 6 B
6 055-61 MARTHA REILLY (12) (D) Mrs B Waring 8 8 ....G Bardwell 1
7 443215 NICHOLAS MISTRESS (12) (C) P Evans 8 0 ....C Cogan (7) 2
– 7 declared –
BETTING: 5-2 Dream On Me, 7-2 Melody Queen, 4-1 Thomas Henry, 5-1 Shabaash, 7-1 Martha Reilly, 10-1 Nicholas Mistress, 14-1 Sky Storm

FORM VERDICT
This return to a mile will suit MELODY QUEEN, who despite carrying top weight, is still meeting her rivals on better terms than she would in a handicap. Course and distance winner Dream On Me may prove her biggest rival.

2.10 PISCES MEDIAN AUCTION MAIDEN STAKES (F) £2,750 added 3YO 1m

1 0- CALLDAT SEVENTEEN (140) P D'Arcy 9 0 ....D Hayden (7) 4
2 2 FORTY FORTE (9) M Channon 9 0 ....J D Smith (3) 2
3 230-20 JAMES DEE (17) (BF) A Jarvis 9 0 ....D Sweeney 1
4 033 PARTE PRIMA (11) S Kettlewell 9 0 ....R FitzPatrick (5) 3
5 62 LADY IRENE (7) T J Naughton 8 9 ....P Doe (3) 5
– 5 declared –
BETTING: 7-4 Forty Forte, 5-2 Lady Irene, 3-1 James Dee, 9-2 Parte Prima, 25-1 Calldat Seventeen

FORM VERDICT
Although he disappointed last time, JAMES DEE has shown the level of form on turf and Fibresand to win a race of this nature and he could be better value than Forty Forte in what could easily end up a tactical battle between the pair.

2.40 INSIDE TRACK RACING CLUB H'CAP (CLASS D) £5,250 added 6f

1 3-3221 MUKARRAB (2) (CD) D Chapman 5 10 4 (6ex) ....A Culhane 6
2 6-111 KRYSTAL MAX (21) (CD) T Mills 6 10 0 ....Lisa Hackett (7) 7
3 2-2654 ANOKATO (1) (CD) Mrs N Macauley 5 9 10 ....P McCabe 5 V
4 32-508 ELLWAY PRINCE (11) (CD) Mrs N Macauley 4 9 3 ....Dean McKeown 2 V
5 -13064 JOHN BOWDLER MUSIC (11) (CD) M Johnston 4 9 2 ....J Fanning 6
6 101202 ACID TEST (2) (CD) M A Buckley 4 9 1 ....R FitzPatrick (5) 1
7 -00360 ALJAZ (9) (D) Miss G Kelleway 9 8 13 ....Dane O'Neill 3
8 002-10 BARITONE (15) (D) S Kettlewell 5 8 4 ....R Winston (3) 4 V
– 8 declared –
BETTING: 5-2 Mukarrab, 7-2 Krystal Max, 4-1 John Bowdler Music, 7-1 Ellway Prince, 8-1 Acid Test, 10-1 Anokato, 12-1 Aljaz, Baritone

FORM VERDICT
The much-improved Mukarrab should make a bold bid to defy his penalty for Thursday's success despite the outside draw, but this does look a bit more competitive. Today's C&D is ideal for ELLWAY PRINCE, who is back on a decent mark judged on the form he was showing here at the end of last year and has a low draw today.

3.15 WINTER DERBY TRIAL STAKES (CLASS B) £15,000 added 1m 2f

1 21001- REFUSE TO LOSE (98) (C) J Eustace 5 9 13 ....J Tate 6
2 03021- PEGNITZ (USA) (194) (D) C Brittain 4 9 9 ....T Sprake 1
3 06-416 ORSAY (11) (CD) W Muir 7 9 7 ....Martin Dwyer 4
4 020-13 PAS DE MEMOIRES (17) K Burke 4 9 7 ....Dean McKeown 5
5 1054-6 PUNISHMENT (38) (D) K Cunningham-Brown 8 9 7 ....R Cochrane 2
6 10-223 TALLULAH BELLE (11) (CD) N Littmoden 5 9 2 ....T G McLaughlin 3
– 6 declared –
BETTING: 5-4 Refuse To Lose, 9-2 Pegnitz, 5-1 Punishment, 6-1 Pas De Memoires, 7-1 Tallulah Belle, 12-1 Orsay

FORM VERDICT
This looks good for REFUSE TO LOSE, who is the leading performer to have run on the AW this winter. Neither of his main rivals on form, Punishment or Pegnitz have run here, while the other two have a lot to find on the book.

3.45 ARENA ON LINE SERVICES HANDICAP (CLASS C) £9,000 added 1m

1 466121 ITALIAN SYMPHONY (10) (CD) P Evans 5 10 0 ....C Cogan (7) 2 V
2 0-1300 THREADNEEDLE (10) (CD) K Burke 6 9 11 ....N Callan (5) 3
3 0005-1 WELVILLE (21) (CD) P Makin 6 9 4 ....A Clark 7
4 -2002 TOPTON (21) (C) P Howling 5 9 4 ....J Quinn 1 B
5 20-504 PUZZLEMENT (11) (CD) C Brittain 5 8 6 ....T Sprake 5
6 030626 REDOUBTABLE (2) (C) (BF) D Chapman 8 8 1 ....L Charnock 6
7 22-361 BARBASON (7) (CD) G L Moore 7 8 1 ....R Brisland (7) 4 B
8 21-515 LYCIAN (17) (CD) (BF) J Toller 4 8 1 ....T Williams 8
– 8 declared –
BETTING: 3-1 Italian Symphony, 7-2 Lycian, 9-2 Puzzlement, 7-1 Threadneedle, 8-1 Topton, Barbason, 10-1 Welville, Redoubtable

FORM VERDICT
This return to Lingfield will suit THREADNEEDLE who looks sure to make a bold bid to make every post a winning one. Lycian, who will also appreciate today's return to Equitrack, and impressive C&D winner Welville look the pair he has to beat.

4.20 RAPPORTEUR HANDICAP (CLASS E) £3,500 added 3YO 1m 2f

1 525-33 BRENDA DEE (22) A Jarvis 9 7 ....D Sweeney 1
2 -36563 MISS TAKE (14) P Evans 9 6 ....C Cogan (7) 3 V
3 0-4312 RED VENUS (21) (BF) Miss G Kelleway 9 5 ....J Weaver 6
4 00-63 LUCKY NEMO (25) C Brittain 9 3 ....T Sprake 8
5 056-01 AZIHAAM (USA) (21) (CD) N Graham 9 2 ....A Polli (3) 4 B
6 30-030 LITTLE HENRY (8) P Evans 8 4 ....R Price 2 V
7 000- CABLE MEDIA GIRL (113) S Kettlewell 8 2 ....M Fenton 7
8 324336 MALCHIK (8) P Howling 8 2 ....J Quinn 5
– 8 declared –
BETTING: 9-4 Azihaam, 7-2 Red Venus, 4-1 Miss Take, 9-2 Lucky Nemo, 8-1 Malchik, 10-1 Brenda Dee, 25-1 Little Henry, 33-1 Cable Media Girl

FORM VERDICT
A fairly uninspiring finale with question marks against a lot of the runners. First-time blinkers helped AZIHAAM show the ability on the track she has shown at home when winning here three weeks ago and she has been found a decent opportunity to build on that today.

MUSSELBURGH

HYPERION
1.50 Celestial Key 2.20 Dacoit 2.50 Invest Wisely 3.25 Coolaw 4.00 Uncle Bert 4.30 Dorans Way (nb) 5.00 Christiansted

GOING: Firm (Good to Firm in places).
■ Right-hand oval course with tight turns.
■ Course is 5m E of Edinburgh on A1. Bus link from Edinburgh station 5m. ADMISSION: Club £12; Grandstand & Paddock £7 (OAPs and unemployed £4). Accompanied under-16s free. CAR PARK: Free.

FIVE-YEAR STATISTICS
■ LEADING TRAINERS: M Hammond 22-124 (17.7%), J H Johnson 20-116 (17.2%), P Monteith 16-92 (17.4%), C Parker 9-59 (15.3%).
■ LEADING JOCKEYS: A Dobbin 18-107 (16.8%), P Carberry 15-53 (28.3%), B Storey 14-143 (9.8%), P Niven 13-72 (18.1%).
■ FAVOURITES: 119-291 (40.9%).
■ LONG DISTANCE RUNNERS: Incepta (1.50) has been sent 350 miles.
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Regar (1.50), Black Weasel (2.20), Three Lakes (3.25).

1.50 SAINTS & SINNERS CLUB OF SCOTLAND MAIDEN HURDLE (E) (Div I) £3,500 2m

1 P BROTHER BERTIE (14) D Robertson 7 11 7 ....Mr C R Weaver (7)
2 0/3 CELESTIAL KEY (USA) (25) M Johnston 9 11 7 ....P Niven
3 6C3223 LAYIK (133) V Thompson 6 11 7 ....Mr M Thompson
4 00-0P6 REGAR (25) I Ferguson 7 11 7 ....D Parker B
5 22-00 THUNDERHEART (52) R Allan 8 11 7 ....A Maguire
6 04-20 MARISOL (119) P Monteith 6 11 2 ....C McCormack (3)
7 40 EMPIRE GOLD (USA) (61) A Turnell 4 10 11 ....Mr C Rae
8 5 FREDS IN THE KNOW (22) N Waggott 4 10 11 ....B Harding
9 INCEPTA (F29) P S McEntee 4 10 11 ....A Dobbin
– 9 declared –
BETTING: 5-4 Celestial Key, 11-4 Empire Gold, 4-1 Layik, 10-1 Thunderheart, Marisol, 12-1 Fred's In The Know, 16-1 Regar, 33-1 others

FORM VERDICT
Celestial Key has a huge chance on his Flat form but there's nothing special about his two hurdle runs, including here earlier in the month. EMPIRE GOLD, a winning miler, has far fewer miles on the clock and unlike Celestial Key, has favourable conditions over hurdles for the first time. He is preferred, despite his stable having had such a quiet season.

2.20 SAINTS & SINNERS CLUB OF SCOTLAND MAIDEN HURDLE (E) (Div II) £3,500 2m

1 ARISAIG (F228) N Waggott 5 11 7 ....C McCormack (3)
2 6E DACOIT (USA) (9) K Morgan 5 11 7 ....A Dobbin
3 660 GYMCRAK JESTER (63) M Barnes 5 11 7 ....S Taylor
4 HIGHWAY (F25) D Smith 5 11 7 ....J Callaghan
5 P0 HONEST HERBERT (11) J Howard Johnson 6 11 7 ....D Parker
6 0 BLACK WEASEL (11) Miss J Craze 4 10 11 ....P Niven B
7 3P20 CURRICULUS (10) M Todhunter 4 10 11 ....B Harding
8 ELLA FALLS (F159) J A Moore 4 10 6 ....Mr M Cogan
– 8 declared –
BETTING: 9-4 Dacoit, Curriculus, 11-2 Highway, 7-1 Honest Herbert, 10-1 Gymcrak Jester, Black Weasel, Ella Falls, 14-1 Arisaig

FORM VERDICT
A toss up between the hard-to-train Dacoit, who has shown a little promise both starts over hurdles but has to prove he stays, Black Weasel, not the easiest of rides but who will be suited by a return to this better ground, and CURRICULUS, who has limitations but has fair track form.

2.50 BELL LAWRIE WHITE NOVICE H'CAP CHASE (CLASS E) £4,500 added 3m

1 2-4223 MIKE STAN (11) (D) (BF) L Lungo 8 11 11 ....A Dobbin
2 15-4P INVEST WISELY (40) (C) (D) M Hammond 7 11 7 ....B Harding
3 1-34F YOUNG TOMO (28) (CD) J Howard Johnson 7 11 4 ....A Maguire
4 4UU42 TRIGGERFISH (25) (C) P Monteith 7 11 1 ....S Taylor
5 6P0005 LEGIBLE (38) I Ferguson 11 10 13 ....D Parker
6 1-F000 LARKSHILL (7) J FitzGerald 8 10 3 ....J Callaghan
7 23P/0E ROCHARISARE (84) T Etherington 10 10 3 ....R McGrath
8 036445 FALCON'S FLAME (10) V Thompson 6 10 2 ....Mr M Thompson
9 65-425 WILLIE HORNE (157) M Todhunter 6 10 0 ....C McCormack (3)
10 00-435 BALLYDAVID (58) J Howard Johnson 7 10 0 ....N Hannity (5)
– 10 declared –
Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Willie Horne 9st 13lb, Ballydavid 9st 10lb.
BETTING: 5-2 Triggerfish, 7-2 Legible, 9-2 Young Tomo, 5-1 Mike Stan, 8-1 Invest Wisely, 14-1 Ballydavid, 16-1 Larkshill, 20-1 others

FORM VERDICT
Not the greatest race ever staged but one that YOUNG TOMO has a good chance of winning if he reproduces his C&D win back in December. Triggerfish is the obvious danger but 3m may just stretch his stamina.

3.25 EBF PROSCOT 'NH' NOVICE HURDLE (Qualifier (D) £4,500 added 2m 4f

1 5210- COOLAW (329) F Murphy 6 11 0 ....A Maguire
2 00-0F4 OVER THE SOLWAY (63) L Lungo 7 11 0 ....W Dowling (5)
3 -004P0 THREE LAKES (USA) (11) I Semple 5 11 0 ....B Harding B
4 52134 WESTERTON (7) J FitzGerald 6 11 0 ....P Niven
5 CRAIGIE BELLE D Robertson 7 10 9 ....Mr C R Weaver (7)
6 460P0P DOUBLE BUCK (36) W Kemp 7 10 9 ....S Taylor
– 6 declared –
BETTING: Evens Westerton, 2-1 Coolaw, 7-1 Over The Solway, 14-1 Three Lakes, 16-1 Craigie Belle, Double Buck

FORM VERDICT
Westerton hasn't quite lived up to bumper promise so far and with Ferdie Murphy's string in such good form, it's worth giving COOLAW the benefit of the doubt on his hurdles debut.

4.00 SCOTTISH LIFE HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS E) £5,000 added 2m 4f

1 1U424 MASTER BAVARD (52) (CD) P Monteith 11 11 13 ....C McCormack (3)
2 1-3040 WISE ADVICE (74) (CD) M Hammond 9 11 12 ....B Harding
3 3433R- CELTIC GIANT (320) L Lungo 9 11 11 ....W Dowling (5)
4 -3242 BRIAR'S DELIGHT (43) R Allan 11 11 10 ....A Dobbin B
5 3331/P UNCLE BERT (119) Miss L Russell 9 11 7 ....R McGrath
6 323P3U PARIAH (14) (D) M Todhunter 10 11 2 ....A Maguire
7 42-F5P GLENDOE (42) A Turnell 8 11 2 ....J Supple
8 3-3445 QUEENSWAY (11) J FitzGerald 7 10 7 ....P Niven
– 8 declared –
BETTING: 11-4 Briar's Delight, 9-2 Master Bavard, 5-1 Uncle Bert, 6-1 Celtic Giant, 7-1 Pariah, Queensway, 8-1 Wise Advice, 14-1 Glendoe

FORM VERDICT
Master Bavard will do well to give weight away all round here despite having conditions very much in his favour. Lurking down the bottom of the handicap QUEENSWAY looks very well handicapped on his hurdles form and with his stable running into form he should go close.

4.30 LITHOPRINT HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS E) £4,500 added 2m 4f

1 46F5F0 SUPERTOP (11) (C) (D) L Lungo 11 12 0 ....W Dowling (5)
2 15-255 LORD PODGSKI (7) P Monteith 8 11 10 ....C McCormack (3)
3 1354- ACAJOU III (FR) (374) (D) M Todhunter 11 11 9 ....B Harding
4 6-1121 DORANS WAY (10) (C) (D) G M Moore 8 11 6 ....N Hannity (5)
5 01-232 JOE BUZZ (80) (D) (BF) F Murphy 7 11 3 ....A Maguire
6 403-45 CLAIRE'S DANCER (40) A Turnell 6 10 4 ....C Sangster (7)
7 32-544 BERNARD SEVEN (10) (BF) Miss L Russell 7 10 4 ....N Horrocks (5)
8 1-4340 PLANNING GAIN (10) T Dun 8 10 0 ....B Storey
– 8 declared –
Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weight: Planning Gain 9st 9lb.
BETTING: 5-2 Dorans Way, 3-1 Joe Buzz, 6-1 Lord Podgski, Bernard Seven, 8-1 Claire's Dancer, 14-1 Acajou III, 16-1 Supertop, 20-1 Planning Gain

FORM VERDICT
Dorans Way has to contend with a step up in the weights and trip and this could be the time to oppose him. Preference is for the more promising JOE BUZZ, who hasn't really had things go his way this season but is very much one to be interested in still.

5.00 IMPERIAL CANCER RESEARCH H'CAP HURDLE (E) £4,000 added 4YO 2m

1 40611 CHRISTIANSTED (3) (D) F Murphy 12 5 (7ex) ....A Maguire
2 324 CADILLAC JUKEBOX (25) G M Moore 10 11 ....N Hannity (5)
3 241 ACCYSTAN (86) (D) M Hammond 10 9 ....N Horrocks (5)
4 6330P NAJJAR (USA) (11) J FitzGerald 10 3 ....A Dobbin
5 0000 MADMAN'S MIRAGE (10) V Thompson 10 0 ....Mr M Thompson
– 5 declared –
Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Madman's Mirage 9st 6lb.
BETTING: 11-8 Christiansted, 2-1 Accystan, 3-1 Cadillac Jukebox, 10-1 Najjar, 66-1 Madman's Mirage

FORM VERDICT
If CHRISTIANSTED is in the same form as he was at Doncaster on Wednesday, he is going to take all the beating, despite his massive weight. Najjar looks the pick of the opposition on his track form.

RESULTS

KEMPTON
Going: Good (Good to Firm in places)

2.20: (3m hunter chase) 1. BAS DE LAINE ....Mr A Hickman 14-1 2. Tinotops ....Miss S Vickery 11-10 fav 3. Copper Thistle ....Mr R Hunnisett 5-2 Also: 10-1 Chism (4th), 11-1 Tug of Peace, 14-1 King of Clare, 25-1 Repeat The Dose, 33-1 Airtrak, Political Sam (5th). 9 ran. 8, 5, dist, dist. (*Winner bay gelding by Le Pontet out of La Gaina, trained and owned by Mrs P Tatley at Cranleigh*). Tote: £17.10; £2.00, £1.30, £1.30. DF: £11.30. CSF: £28.70. NR: Loyal Note.

2.55: (2m 5f novice hurdle) 1. PERCY PARKEEPER ..C Llewellyn 6-1 2. Stormworthy Miss ..A Thornton 50-1 3. Audacter ....R Dunwoody 12-1 Also: 9-2 fav Strong Cabinet pulled up, 5-1 Blueshaan (5th), Coh Sho No pulled up, 11-2 Doc Ryan's pulled up, 6-1 Motet (6th), 14-1 Southernhay Boy pulled up, 33-1 Kings Vean (4th), Sir Samuel, Tommy Hotspur pulled up, 50-1 Brownings Boy pulled up, 66-1 Manna Brave pulled up. 14 ran. 8, 2, 1¼, 12, 4. (*Winner bay gelding by Teenoso out of True Clown, trained by N Twiston-Davies at Cheltenham for Mr & Mrs Peter Orton*). Tote: £6.60; £1.40, £19.90, £3.30. DF: £298.30. CSF: £259.29.

3.25: (3m novice chase) 1. KING'S BANKER ..M A Fitzgerald 11-8 fav 2. Native Player ....J Aspell 16-1 3. Strong Paladin ....J Osborne 9-2 Also: 13-8 Cheerful Aspect (5th), 10-1 Sweet Lord (4th), 66-1 Laura Lugs. 6 ran. 7, 10, 5, dist. (*Winner bay gelding by King's Ride out of Wren's Princess, trained by N Henderson at Lambourn for J E H Collins*). Tote: £2.80; £1.70, £3.30. DF: £21.80. CSF: £18.95. NR: Emerald Statement.

3.55: (2m 5f handicap hurdle) 1. FILSCOT ....J A McCarthy 12-1 2. Scoring Pedigree ..A Thornton 5-2 fav 3. Amaze ....W Greatrex 12-1 Also: 7-2 Lord York (6th), 9-2 Call My Guest, 12-1 Aboo Hom, Far Dawn, 14-1 Go Go Henry, 20-1 Nine O Three, Royal Piper (5th), 50-1 Djais, Tulane, 66-1 Daring King (4th). 13 ran. Sht-hd, 7, 10, 11, 13. (*Winner bay gelding by Scottish Reel out of Filiode, trained by C Morlock at Wantage for P J Morgan*). Tote: £12.20; £2.40, £1.70, £3.70. DF: £23.20. CSF: £38.24. Tricast: £352.96. Tote Trifecta: £829.40.

4.30: (2m 4f 110yds handicap chase) 1. WISE KING ....T J Murphy 7-2 2. Boardroom Shuffle ....L Aspell 4-1 3. Millcroft Riviera ..A Thornton 5-2 fav Also: 7-2 Peace Lord (5th), 9-1 Sound Reveille (6th), 16-1 Not My Line, 20-1 Plunder Bay (4th). 7 ran. 12, 16, 5, 1¼, 20. (*Winner bay gelding by Rakaposhi King out of Sunwise, trained by J Old at Wroughton for Denis Mine*). Tote: £4.00; £2.50, £2.50. DF: £6.50. CSF: £16.38.

5.00: (2m NH novice hurdle) 1. STAR OF DUNGANNON ..AP McCoy 3-1 2. Leeborn ....C Maude evens fav 3. Borolown Lord ....J Osborne 8-1 Also: 5-1 Running Water, 14-1 Southdown Lad, 33-1 Gare Hill (5th), 33-1 Maybeseven, Persrolla (4th), Proper Primitive (6th), Tudor King, 66-1 Withesway Lady. 11 ran. 4, 11, 12, 3½, 8. (*Winner bay gelding by Forzando out of Kay To The River, trained by M Pipe at Wellington for Mrs L M Sewell*). Tote: £4.10; £1.20, £1.30, £1.90. DF: £3.30. CSF: £6.20. NR: Hardy.
Jackpot: not won (pool of £6,946.58 carried forward to Haydock today).
Placepot: £81.50. Quadpot: £9.90.
Place 6: £106.83. Place 5: £86.90.

MARKET RASEN
Going: Hurdles Good to Soft, Soft, Good to Soft back straight

2.00: 1. BACK ON THE LASH (N Williamson) 13-8 fav; 2. Ryslux 16-1; 3. Ballymaloe Boy 12-1. 16 ran. 12, 2. (Miss Venetia Williams, Hereford). Tote: £2.50; £1.30, £4.30, £3.00. DF: £23.00. CSF: £30.31.

2.30: 1. PRIME EXAMPLE (N Williamson) 11-4 jt fav; 2. Treasure Again 9-2; 3. Cadrillon 25-1. 11 ran. 11-4 jt fav Tom's River (4th). 4, 13. (Martin Todhunter, Ulverston). Tote: £3.60; £2.00, £1.90, £4.90. DF: £12.20. CSF: £14.97. Tricast: £244.88.

3.05: 1. LUKE WARM (G Bradley) 100-30; 2. Cardinal Rule 4-7 fav; 3. Cyborg De Beaulal 16-1. 4 ran. 8, 5. (D Gandolfo, Wantage). Tote: £2.60. DF: £2.20. CSF: £5.53.

3.35: 1. JULIES JEWEL (W Worthington) 25-1; 2. Goodwood Cavalier 2-5 fav; 3. Imshishway 11-2. 12 ran. 1½, 8. (M Chapman, Market Rasen). Tote: £13.30; £1.60, £1.10, £1.70. DF: £7.10. CSF: £35.48.

4.10: 1. SAD MAD BAD (P Niven) 1-4 fav; 2. Keen To The Last 12-1; 3. Mademist Sam 33-1. 5 ran. 5, 27. (Mrs M Reveley, Saltburn). Tote: £1.30; £1.10, £3.00. DF: £3.40. CSF: £3.81.

4.40: 1. PRUSSIA (G Tormey) 8-1; 2. Royal Arctic 8-1; 3. Lord Pat 11-1. 10 ran. 9-2 fav Aussie Bob. 20, 5. (W Clay, Fulford). Tote: £12.20; £2.40, £1.70, £2.00. DF: £28.40. CSF: £63.14. Tricast: £643.07.

5..0: 1. IRISH WILDCARD (Mr J Crowley) 7-1; 2. Brancepeth Belle 8-1; 3. Fair And Fancy 7-1. 10 ran. 2-1 fav Get The Point. 3, 1½. (J Howard Johnson, Crook). Tote: £8.70; £3.80, £2.00, £2.00. DF: £34.50. CSF: £58.96. Tricast: £379.11.
Placepot: £56.30. Quadpot: £13.30.
Place 6: £119.77. Place 5: £54.57.

SOUTHWELL
Going: Standard

1.10: 1. IMPELLING (Darren Williams) 9-2; 2. Zabriskie 11-1; 3. Linguistic Dancer 12-1. 9 ran. 11-4 fav Ollie's Chuckle (5th). ¾, hd. (K Burke). Tote: £6.20; £1.80, £2.40, £5.40. DF: £13.80. CSF: £51.25. Tricast: £522.38. NR: Miss All Alone.

1.40: 1. SAGUARO (P Fitzsimons) 14-1; 2. Golden Lyric 6-5 fav; 3. Ikram Boy 8-4. 9 ran. 13, nk. (K Morgan). Tote: £12.00; £4.10, £1.10, £1.10. DF: £17.30. CSF: £28.52. Tricast: £51.71.

2.10: 1. MAITEAMIA (J Quinn) 9-2; 2. Nifty Norman 13-2; 3. Tom Tun 7-4 fav. 10 ran. 1, 1½. (S Bowring). Tote: £5.50; £2.40, £2.70, £1.10. DF: £17.50. CSF: £31.02. Tricast: £66.42.

2.45: 1. LOST SPIRIT (L Charnock) 12-1; 2. Crash Call Lady 100-30; 3. An Executive Do 4-5 fav. 6 ran. 13, ¾. (P Hiatt). Tote: £16.10; £3.50, £1.80. DF: £31.20. CSF: £47.53. NR: River Boy.

3.15: 1. COOL SECRET (N Callan) 8-1; 2. Rude Awakening 10-1; 3. Naro Tirol 9-4 fav. 9 ran. ¾, 1½. (K Burke). Tote: £16.50; £3.20, £2.30, £1.20. DF: £22.20. CSF: £76.89. Tricast: £219.83.

3.45: 1. ROYAL CASCADE (R Cochrane) 9-2; 2. Walking Knight 11-1; 3. Dahlidya 8-1. 10 ran. 7-2 fav Batsman. 7, hd. (B McMahon). Tote: £4.30; £1.40, £2.90, £2.00. DF: £36.00. CSF: £50.65. Tricast: £358.92.

4.20: 1. IRISH CREAM (T G McLaughlin) 11-8 fav; 2. Carrie Pooter 8-1; 3. Rich Ballerina 11-2. 10 ran. 8, ½. (P Evans). Tote: £1.90; £1.20, £2.10, £2.20. DF: £6.10. CSF: £12.68.

4.50: 1. COUNT DE MONEY (J Quinn) 5-2 fav; 2. Yes Keemo Sabee 7-2; 3. Johnnie The Joker 16-1. 13 ran. Nk, 4. (S Bowring). Tote: £2.60; £1.60, £1.60. DF: £6.10. CSF: £9.88. Tricast: £111.36.
Placepot: £389.30. Quadpot: £29.20.
Place 6: £181.95. Place 5: £49.50.

PUNTERS' GUIDE

Eudipe's power to keep Wolfe at bay

Steve Smith Eccles analyses today's Greenalls Grand National Trial at Haydock



General Wolfe: Has won his last four races at Haydock but looked beaten when falling at Uttoxeter last time. He faces a stiff task under top-weight over this trip.

Cyborgo: Has had his problems and is one to avoid.

Eudipe: A class act who was second to Teeton Mill on soft ground in the Hennessy before obliging over a longer trip at Sandown. Sure to be in the first three barring a fall.

Earthmover: His form figures – fell and unseated rider – fail to inspire but if this normally good jumper puts in a clear round I expect him to be in the thick of it.

Fiddling The Facts: A tough, consistent mare who jumps well and stays. However, she lacks a turn of foot and will probably have to be content with a minor placing.

Dom Samourai: This little grey has to be pushed and squeezed every inch of the way and usually tires his jockey out before the finish.

Him Of Praise: Came good in the Uttoxeter National Trial and could confirm superiority over Fiddling The Facts, Forest Ivory and Mudahim.

Mudahim: Ran well last time but looks too long in the tooth at the age of 13.

Forest Ivory: Always seems to run well without getting involved in the finish.

Davy Blake: Came good at Kelso last time but has a lot more on his plate here.

Young Kenny: Stays well but better in his own grade.

Cavalero: Another who is unlikely to figure.

Island Chief: Has two wins to his credit but takes on some good horses from a long way out of the handicap.

Conclusion: EUDIPE'S form is rock solid. His performance behind the Cheltenham Gold Cup favourite, Teeton Mill, in the Hennessy Gold Cup was first class and Martin Pipe's runner should oblige. The danger is Earthmover.

HAYDOCK

1.15: Simply Gifted has done nothing wrong and fully deserves the weight. But the interesting proposition in receipt of 21lb is PREMIUM QUEST, who is best judged on his encouraging debut effort against Charlie's Gold and his win from the front at Market Rasen.

□□□

1.45: FOURTH IN LINE may have won only narrowly here last time, but the runner-up is no mug. He rates the bet getting 12lb from Storm Damage, who should go close after sound efforts at Kempton and Cheltenham.

□□□

2.15: Although the trip is wrong, the weights are right for GO-INFORMAL, who heads for the Stayers' Hurdle at Cheltenham if coming through this test unscathed. Back from injury, he might outstay Blowing Wind and Master Beveled getting a very generous 12lb.

□□□

2.45: ISLAND CHIEF does not have the nigh-impossible task his place 17lb out of the handicap suggests. Back from injury with decent wins at Wetherby and Ayr, he can hold his own in this tougher league.

HYPERION'S TV TIPS

KEMPTON

2.35: This trip looks too short for class act Prominent Profile, and highly-tried RENZO is a viable alternative.

□□□

3.05: MAKOUNJI would have a good chance at level weights and cannot be opposed off only 10st 2lb.

□□□

3.35: This is between KATARINO and Scarlet Pimpernel, the Henderson charge so impressive in his two British starts that he has to be the selection.

□□□

4.10: Dr Leunt and Mr Strong Gale deservedly head the betting, but CHIEF'S SONG is worth an interest at 20-1. The chief doubt is stamina, but he has been running on well at the end of his races at 2m4f.

□□□

4.40: There are big question marks over most in this field, and the vote goes to LORD JIM who did so well last term and was injured on his reappearance.

10-YR-TALE ON RACING POST CHASE

	1989	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98
Fate of the favourites:	P/P	1	6	P	3	3	F	1/2	4	4
Winner's place in betting:	3	1	2	3	0	3	2	1J	0	2
Starting-prices:	5-1	8-11	7-2	6-1	11-1	7-1	11-2	3-1	14-1	4-1
Winners' weights:	11.1	12.3	10.7	11.10	10.10	10.4	11.2	10.8	10.2	10.10
Winners' ages:	8	11	9	10	10	6	8	10	11	10

Profit or loss to £1 stake: Favourites –£6.27 Second Favourites +£6.00

Percentage of winners placed 1st, 2nd or 3rd in last race: 50%

Shortest-priced winner: Desert Orchid (1990) 8-11

Longest-priced winner: Mudahim (1997) 14-1

Top trainer: K Bailey – Docklands Express (1991 & 1992)

Top jockey: R Dunwoody – Desert Orchid (1990), Rough Quest (1996)
A Tory – Docklands Express (1991 & 1992)

FIRST SHOW

HAYDOCK 1.15

	C	H	L	T
Simply Gifted	7-4	13-8	2-1	13-8
Optimistic Chris	11-2	5-1	9-2	11-2
New Bird	7-1	11-2	7-1	11-2
Trailside	6-1	7-1	6-1	13-2
Navarre Samson	8-1	8-1	8-1	8-1
Charlie's Gold	6-1	9-1	9-1	10-1
Premium Quest	12-1	10-1	8-1	12-1
Dmowski	16-1	16-1	16-1	14-1
Rajati	16-1	20-1	14-1	16-1

Each-way a fifth the odds, places 1, 2, 3

HAYDOCK 1.45

	C	H	L	T
Fourth In Line	10-11	11-10	5-4	5-4
Storm Damage	11-4	5-2	5-2	11-4
Blue Charm	5-1	10-3	7-2	10-3
Mouse Bird	7-1	8-1	13-2	7-1
Diwali Dancer	10-1	12-1	10-1	9-1
Commercial Artist	40-1	40-1	40-1	33-1
Monaughty Man	500-1	500-1	250-1	150-1
Quixall Crossett	500-1	500-1	200-1	150-1

Each-way a fifth the odds, places 1, 2, 3

HAYDOCK 2.45

	C	H	L	S	T
Fiddling T Facts	9-2	9-2	9-2	5-1	5-1
General Wolfe	5-1	5-1	5-1	5-1	5-1
Earthmover	5-1	5-1	11-2	11-2	5-1
Eudipe	11-2	5-1	5-1	11-2	6-1
Him Of Praise	9-1	9-1	8-1	8-1	8-1
Island Chief	11-2	7-1	8-1	9-1	6-1
Young Kenny	10-1	9-1	9-1	10-1	10-1
Forest Ivory	12-1	12-1	10-1	11-1	12-1
Davy Blake	16-1	20-1	20-1	16-1	16-1
Dom Samourai	20-1	16-1	20-1	16-1	16-1
Cyborgo	25-1	25-1	20-1	20-1	25-1
Mudahim	33-1	33-1	33-1	28-1	33-1
Cavalero	40-1	40-1	33-1	40-1	33-1

Each-way a quarter the odds, places 1, 2, 3

C Coral, H William Hill, L Ladbrokes, S Stanley, T Tote

KEMPTON 4.10

	C	H	L	S	T
Dr Leunt	11-4	11-4	10-3	3-1	3-1
Mr Strong Gale	3-1	3-1	11-4	7-2	3-1
Even Flow	9-2	9-2	9-2	4-1	9-2
Bitofamixup	7-1	6-1	7-1	7-1	13-2
The Land Agent	6-1	7-1	6-1	15-2	7-1
Challenger D Luc	11-1	10-1	9-1	9-1	11-1
Unguided Missile	11-1	12-1	9-1	12-1	11-1
Phillip's Woody	20-1	20-1	20-1	16-1	16-1
Chief's Song	20-1	20-1	25-1	16-1	14-1

Each-way a fifth the odds, places 1, 2, 3

C Coral, H William Hill, L Ladbrokes, S Stanley, T Tote

HAYDOCK

HYPERION
1.15 Premium Quest
1.45 Fourth In Line
2.15 Go-Informal
2.45 ISLAND CHIEF (nap)
3.20 Bunbury
3.50 Potentate
4.25 Granit D'Estruval

GOING: Soft.
■ Left-hand course with imposing drop fences and run-in of two furlongs.
■ Course is near junction of A580 and M6. Newton station 2m. ADMISSION: County Stand £17; Tattersalls £10; Newton Stand £5 (OAPs half-price in Tattersalls and Newton Stand). CAR PARK: Free.

FIVE-YEAR STATISTICS
■ LEADING TRAINERS: M Pipe 36-153 (23.5%), N Twiston-Davies 19-81 (23.5%), D Nicholson 13-64 (20.3%), Mrs M Reveley 12-68 (17.6%), J M Jefferson 9-26 (34.6%).
■ LEADING JOCKEYS: R Dunwoody 20-75 (26.7%), C Llewellyn 13-59 (22%), A Maguire 12-52 (23.1%), C Maude 11-45 (24.4%), L Wyer 11-73 (15.1%), W Marston 10-50 (20%).
■ FAVOURITES: 132-334 (39.5%).
■ LONG DISTANCE RUNNERS:
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Trailside (1.15), Thatching Lad (4.25).

1.15 VICTOR LUDORUM HANDICAP HURDLE (C) £7,500 added 4YO 2m Penalty Value £5,173 BBC1

1 1F21 SIMPLY GIFTED (61) (D) (Steve Hammond) T Easterby 11 10 ... L Wyer
red, white sash, emerald green sleeves, white armlets, emerald green cap
2 312 NEW BIRD (GER) (48) (D) (BF) (Peter E Clinton) D Nicholson 11 5 ... R Johnson
red, white epaulets, black sleeves, red and white striped cap
3 11122 NAVARRE SAMSON (FR) (35) (D) (Winton Bloodstock Ltd) P Hobbs 11 2 ... R Widger (5)
yellow, emerald green cross of lorraine, halved sleeves, emerald green cap
4 12506 CHARLIE'S GOLD (F18) (CD) (Classic Gold) A Bailey 11 0 ... N Williamson
purple, white sash and stars on sleeves, white cap
5 P-113 TRAILSIDE (FR) (61) (D) (BF) (T S M Cunningham) M Pipe 10 10 ... A P McCoy B
emerald green, yellow sash and sleeves, white cap
6 141 OPTIMISTIC CHRIS (23) (D) (Optimistic Racing) A Streeter 10 8 ... Gary Lyons
dark blue, grey chevrons, grey and dark blue halved sleeves, grey cap
7 10 DMOWSKI (36) (D) (BF) (P Saunders And R George) N Twiston-Davies 10 3 ... C Maude
white, dark blue epaulets, dark blue cap
8 210 PREMIUM QUEST (91) (BF) (J C Parsons) R Fahey 10 3 ... E Callaghan
white, black star, white sleeves, black seams, black cap, white star
9 411634 RAJATI (USA) (12) (D) (Heatley Racing) A Streeter 10 3 ... T Eley
white, red sash, white sleeves, royal blue armlets, royal blue cap
– 9 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st 3lb. True handicap weights: Premium Quest, Rajati 9st 13lb.
BETTING: 13-8 Simply Gifted, 11-2 New Bird, 6-1 Trailside, Optimistic Chris, 8-1 Navarre Samson, 10-1 Charlie's Gold, Premium Quest, 16-1 Dmowski, 20-1 Rajati
1998: Sad Mad Bad 4 11 10 P Niven 10-1 (Mrs M Reveley) 13 ran

FORM GUIDE

Simply Gifted: Dual winner at Wetherby (latest by 15 lengths) and would have beaten Navarre Samson there but for falling two out (4lb worse here). Acts in soft ground
New Bird: Flat winner in Germany. Had Trailside 33 lengths behind when winning at Kempton and not disgraced at weights when 2nd to Flush at Warwick
Navarre Samson: Lazy type who has been blinkered (left off today). Ran poorly at Sandown last time when 2nd to Hit And Run and soft ground against him here
Charlie's Gold: Beat newcomer Premium Quest here and 14 lengths behind Simply Gifted (stone better today) when 3rd to Katarino at Cheltenham. Jumped badly last time when last of six to Hit And Run at Sandown and had a Flat run since
Trailside: Won four times at Auteuil and followed Newbury success (beat Shergarzer) with a moody 3rd to New Bird at Kempton. Now 16lb better and tried blinkered
Optimistic Chris: Uttoxeter seller winner and scored in better race at Kelso
Dmowski: Well-bred gelding and debut winner by 24 lengths at Towcester. Hot favourite at Huntingdon but faded from two out when 7th to Gemstone
Premium Quest: Pleasing debut here (5lb better with Charlie's Gold) and made all at Market Rasen next time. Not good enough against older horses last time (c/jockeys' race won by Cashaplenty at Warwick)
Rajati: Dual winner and stiff task after latest 4th to What A Fuss at Hereford

VERDICT: There are no problems with the ground concerning SIMPLY GIFTED, who fully deserves the weight against this opposition. He bounced back with a 15-length success at Wetherby after finding Triumph fancy Katarino too good at Cheltenham and what beats him today is the winner. Kempton scorer New Bird was conceding 11lb when second to Flush but that filly has since been beaten at Taunton.

1.45 GREENALLS ORIGINAL LONDON DRY GIN H'CAP CHASE (B) £20,000 2m 4f £13,498 BBC1

1 -3312 STORM DAMAGE (28) (D) (T Curry, C Lewis, P Mitchell) P Nicholls 7 11 10 ... A P McCoy
yellow, black star, emerald green cap, black star
2 12-154 BLUE CHARM (28) (D) (Mrs M C Lindsay) Mrs S Bradburne 9 11 9 ... Mr M Bradburne (3)
pink and royal blue (halved), hooped sleeves, quartered cap
3 34/43- COMMERCIAL ARTIST (378) (D) (L A Morgan) D McCain 13 11 8 ... A C Coyle (5)
royal blue, white sash and armlets, quartered cap
4 -1511 FOURTH IN LINE (35) (CD) (John Nicholls) Miss V Williams 11 10 12 ... N Williamson
royal blue, white epaulets, checked sleeves
5 PF5P-5 DIWALI DANCER (35) (CD) (B E Case) M Pipe 9 10 12 ... C Maude
black and royal blue (quartered), beige sleeves and cap
6 -12224 MOUSE BIRD (15) (Osbert Pierce) D Gandolfo 9 10 3 ... R Johnson
peacock blue, purple and yellow hooped sleeves, yellow cap
7 5345P0 MONAUGHTY MAN (7) (Mrs Karen Woodhead) E Caine 13 10 0 ... Mr O Fagan
white, royal blue spots, purple sleeves and cap
8 P5P65P QUIXALL CROSSETT (11) (Mrs Karen Woodhead) E Caine 14 10 0 ... Gary Lyons
white, royal blue spots, purple sleeves, white cap
– 8 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Monaughty Man 7st 1lb, Quixall Crossett 6st 9lb.
BETTING: 5-4 Fourth In Line, 5-2 Storm Damage, 4-1 Blue Charm, 7-1 Mouse Bird, 10-1 Diwali Dancer, 33-1 Commercial Artist, 500-1 Monaughty Man, Quixall Crossett
1998: Even Flow 9 10 9 T J Murphy 3-1 (T Casey) 7 ran

FORM GUIDE

Storm Damage: Kempton win from The Land Agent subsequently boosted by Dante's Cavalier (3rd) at Sandown. 7lb higher today and stiff task against Dr Leunt from 6lb out of handicap at Cheltenham last time
Blue Charm: Only 1lb higher mark since Aintree win from Pentlands Flyer. First run for two months when 4th to Major Bell in Great Yorkshire (3m). Wins over the trip
Commercial Artist: Without a run for a year and little chance in this company
Fourth In Line: Has been raised 13lb since an easy win from Dante's Cavalier at Newbury. Just held on from Scrahan Cross in novice here next time. In good heart
Diwali Dancer: Dual winner over C&D but tailed off here behind Super Coin over 2m on reappearance. Dropped 6lb and will do better for the return to 2m4f
Mouse Bird: Stratford winner on reappearance and stayed on in 4th to Country Star at Newbury (2m1f) last time after looking moody. Stays the trip
Monaughty Man: Usually finishes tailed off and no hope from 3st out of handicap
Quixall Crossett: Very moderate and can safely be ignored

VERDICT: Storm Damage is at the top of his form and though his latest runs have been with feather weights he should still be a threat to them all off 11st 10lb in a much weaker grade. Blue Charm's fourth in the Great Yorkshire was a decent effort and he's just as effective over today's shorter trip. But the winning run of FOURTH IN LINE may not be over after the latest success over course and distance.

2.15 STRETTON LEISURE SELECT HURDLE (B) £15,000 added 2m Penalty Value £10,260 BBC1

1 111-4F BLOWING WIND (FR) (35) (D) (P A Deal) M Pipe 6 11 12 ... A P McCoy
dark blue, yellow cross belts, collar and cuffs, striped cap
2 -23212 MASTER BEVELED (21) (CD) (Mrs E J Williams) P Evans 9 11 12 ... J P Spencer
dark blue, pink star, dark blue sleeves, pink stars, pink cap, dark blue star
3 10-255 BELLATOR (35) (D) (Peter Richardson) Miss V Williams 6 11 8 ... N Williamson
black, black and yellow check cap
4 2144- GO-INFORMAL (422) (D) (Marshall Dixon & Griffin) J M Jefferson 8 11 0 ... L Wyer
yellow, black stripe and armlets, hooped cap
5 045-4 HOME COUNTIES (63) (C) (D) (Ms A Hartley) J Hetherton 10 11 0 ... D J Moffatt
orange, black seams on body and star on cap
– 5 declared –

BETTING: 5-4 Master Beveled, 11-8 Blowing Wind, 6-1 Bellator, 10-1 Go-Informal, 16-1 Home Counties
1998: Red Blazer 7 11 4 J Culloty 4-5 fav (Miss H Knight) 6 ran

FORM GUIDE

Blowing Wind: Notched Imperial Cup/County Hurdle double last year. Fourth with 12st to Polar Prospect at Sandown on reappearance and then fell fifth in conditions race won by Master Beveled here. Holds Champion Hurdle entry
Master Beveled: Typical game effort to beat Wahiba Sands here and stern task at weights when beaten sht hd by Midnight Legend at Sandown. Leading chance
Bellator: Capable type but soon struggling when 45 lengths behind Master Beveled here last time. Needs to improve plenty on same weight terms
Go-Informal: Smart stayer and having first run since suffering leg injury. Latest win gained from Antapoura at Newbury (3m1f) and holds Stayers' Hurdle entry
Home Counties: In need of seasonal outing (and first run for new trainer) when a 21-length 4th to Cottstown Boy in Ayr handicap (2m4f). 2m too sharp nowadays

VERDICT: Master Beveled is wonderfully tough and buckled down for a fight once again at Sandown last time when conceding plenty of weight to Midnight Legend. He has the competent Jamie Spencer aboard and holds a clear advantage over Bellator on course running last month. In that same race BLOWING ROCK came to grief and has worth chancing on his impressive big-race handicap double last season.

2.45 GREENALLS GRAND NATIONAL TRIAL H'CAP CHASE (A) £85,000 3m 4f 110yds £49,100 BBC1

1 201-1F GENERAL WOLFE (21) (C) (The Winning Line) Miss V Williams 10 11 10 ... N Williamson
white, black seams, white and yellow halved sleeves, yellow cap
2 P2P-P4 CYBORGO (FR) (28) (County Stores (Somerset) Holdings Ltd) M Pipe 9 11 6 ... S Durack B
yellow, maroon cross belts, royal blue sleeves, royal blue and yellow quartered cap
3 23-3n EUDIPE (FR) (49) (C) (D A Johnson) M Pipe 7 11 5 ... A P McCoy
royal blue, emerald green sleeves, white cap, emerald green spots
4 111-FU EARTHMOVER (14) (D) (BF) (R M Penny) P Nicholls 8 10 12 ... T J Murphy
yellow, brown disc, striped sleeves, hooped cap
5 PF-322 FIDDLING THE FACTS (21) (BF) (Mrs E Roberts) N Henderson 8 10 12 ... R Johnson
black, red sash, quartered cap
6 P-12P0 DOM SAMOURAI (FR) (49) (CD) (B A Kilpatrick) M Pipe 8 10 11 ... C Maude B
emerald green, scarlet hooped sleeves and cap
7 R-5021 HIM OF PRAISE (21) (CD) (M G St Quinton) O Sherwood 9 10 7 ... J A McCarthy B
pink and yellow diamonds, yellow sleeves and cap
8 61/0-4 MUDAHIM (21) (C) (D) (Salvo Giannini) P Hobbs 13 10 1 ... R Widger (5)
yellow, emerald green star on body and cap, yellow sleeves, emerald green stars
9 2-4333 FOREST IVORY (21) (The Old Foresters Partnership) D Nicholson 8 10 0 ... O McPhail (5)
dark blue and yellow stripes, white sleeves and cap
10 -02431 DAVY BLAKE (23) (T N Dalgetty) T Dalgetty 12 10 0 ... A S Smith
chocolate, green cap, white spots
11 23412U YOUNG KENNY (7) (BF) (J G Read) P Beaumont 8 10 0 ... B Powell
purple, yellow sash, hooped sleeves, yellow cap
12 -22F23 CAVALERO (57) (H J Manners) H Manners 10 10 0 ... S Curran
dark blue, red cap, green spots
13 1F1/11 ISLAND CHIEF (14) (George Dilger) P Beaumont 10 10 0 ... R Supple
grey, maroon hoop, maroon sleeves, grey armlets, quartered cap
– 13 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Forest Ivory 9st 13lb, Davy Blake 9st 11lb, Young Kenny 9st 5lb, Cavalero 8st 0lb, Island Chief 8st 11lb.
BETTING: 5-1 Fiddling The Facts, Earthmover, General Wolfe, 11-2 Eudipe, 15-2 Him Of Praise, 10-1 Island Chief, Young Kenny, 12-1 Forest Ivory, 16-1 Dom Samourai, 20-1 others
1998: Dom Samourai 7 10 0 C Maude 10-1 (M Pipe) 15 ran

FORM GUIDE

General Wolfe: Returned from year off to repeat course win in Peter Marsh (beat Simply Dashing 4 lengths). Close up when fell final fence in Him Of Praise's race at Uttoxeter (3m4f) and now 4lb better with winner and 2lb with Fiddling The Facts (2nd)
Cyborgo: Lightly raced over past two seasons and stiff task last time when 4th to stablemate Cyfor Malta at Cheltenham. Likely to struggle
Eudipe: Second in Hennessy, 4th in Welsh National and game winner with 12st from Gîmer Isle at Sandown (3m5f). 5lb higher mark today but fine chance
Earthmover: Cheltenham Foxhunters winner last season. Jumping errors so far this term (departed at third at Newbury) but a big threat with clear round
Fiddling The Facts: Decent mare and 3rd in Hennessy prior to unlucky 2nd in Welsh National (made crucial mistakes). Failed to confirm that form with Him Of Praise at Uttoxeter (3m4f) last time when caught and beaten 2 lengths. 2lb better off today
Dom Samourai: Winner of this race last year but has struggled in two runs since a win over C&D (4lb higher mark here) and a 2nd to See More Business at Chepstow
Him Of Praise: Has responded to blinkers and spurs to finish 2nd to Baronet at Cheltenham and to gain win from Fiddling The Facts at Uttoxeter. Has won over 4m here
Mudahim: Winner of 1997 Irish National and first run for new trainer when a well beaten 4th to Him Of Praise at Uttoxeter
Forest Ivory: 6 lengths behind Fiddling The Facts when 3rd in Welsh National but 25 lengths adrift of that mare when 3rd to Him Of Praise at Uttoxeter. Looks held
Davy Blake: Kelso specialist and gained eighth win there when beating Swanbister last time. May not be good enough in this company and 3lb out of handicap
Young Kenny: Early casualty in Eider and unlikely to figure from 9lb out of handicap on his earlier Wetherby showing (made mistakes against Step On Eyre)
Cavalero: Has won over 4m2f but not as effective this season. Stiff task from a stone out of the weights
Island Chief: Off course for two years because of hairline leg fracture but as good as ever with wins at Wetherby and Ayr. Biggest test yet from 17lb out of handicap proper but could still be the one they have to beat

VERDICT: Him Of Praise needs plenty of pushing and shoving and the introduction of blinkers and spurs has shown him a more willing animal. Has closely matched with Fiddling The Facts and General Wolfe on Uttoxeter form, and Fiddling The Facts in turn has the same sort of chance as Eudipe on Hennessy running. There is also the chance of top hunter Earthmover going well if he stays on his feet but the choice is ISLAND CHIEF despite his position from out of the handicap proper.

3.20 MTB GROUP MAIDEN HURDLE (CLASS D) £4,000 added 2m 6f Penalty Value £3,022

1 0-5P BEAU BRUMMIE BOY (58) (Mrs D Williams & Mr G Williams) I Williams 5 11 7 ... R Wakley
2 54 BUNBURY (71) (Richard I G Jones/Ann L Jones) K Bailey 6 11 7 ... N Williamson
3 1- CHERGAN (391) (Copland, Hardie and Steel) Mrs S Bradburne 6 11 7 ... Mr M Bradburne (3)
4 1-4362 LUCKY ROSS (35) (M I L Racing) H Daly 6 11 7 ... R Johnson
5 6-52F6 PRINCE TOR (35) (K J Condliffe) S Brookshaw 6 11 7 ... X Aizpuru (3)
6 0222 RASH REMARK (107) (BF) (D A Johnson) M Pipe 6 11 7 ... A P McCoy
7 2-2225 ROCKCLIFFE GOSSIP (60) (Simon Keswick) N Twiston-Davies 7 11 7 ... C Maude
8 4/ SHEEPCOTE HILL (780) (J E Brown) D Nicholson 8 11 7 ... O McPhail (5)
9 000/PP SIOUX WARRIOR (63) (Philip J Grundy) N Tinkler 7 11 7 ... G F Ryan (3) B
10 106- SMITH'S PERK (378) (Arthur Smith) Mrs J Pitman 6 11 7 ... D Leahy
11 P CUMBRIAN KATE (87) (J C Haynes) J Haynes 7 11 2 ... Mr J Crowley (5)
12 3025 JUST JENNY (15) (J T Stimpson) A Streeter 6 11 2 ... T J Murphy
13 5/U06- MAZZELMO (F7) (Miss E Oats) A Bailey 6 11 2 ... S Wynne
14 0-156 NEVERMIND HEY (23) (Champ Chicken Co Ltd) D McCain 5 11 2 ... A C Coyle (5)
– 14 declared –

BETTING: 13-8 Lucky Ross, 7-2 Rash Remark, Bunbury, 5-1 Rockcliffe Gossip, 12-1 Chergan, Smith's Perk, Nevermind Hey, 16-1 others
1998: Aboo Hom 4 10 10 C Maude 9-2 (M Pipe) 18 ran

FORM VERDICT

RASH REMARK, who showed plenty of ability in Irish bumpers and represents the Johnson-Pipe team, is entered in the big Cheltenham novice events and would not have to be that class to win in this company. Lucky Ross is no speed merchant but has some solid form in the book and ran well over a shorter trip here last month. He is officially rated narrowly superior to Rockcliffe Gossip, who was rather disappointing last time out but should figure prominently.

3.50 WHITE RABBIT NOVICE CHASE (CLASS C) £8,000 added 2m Penalty Value £5,446

1 0-0112 POTENTATE (USA) (15) (D) (Jim Weeden) M Pipe 8 11 12 ... A P McCoy
2 0/5050 EBEN AL HABEEB (15) (D) (Bankhouse Confederacy) D McCain 8 11 5 ... A C Coyle (5) B
3 834-36 TRIONA'S HOPE (227) (Mrs Karen Woodhead) E Caine 10 11 5 ... Mr O Fagan
4 030F6F CREGG ROSE (14) (Mrs Karen Woodhead) E Caine 9 11 0 ... Gary Lyons
– 4 declared –

BETTING: 1-20 Potentate, 16-1 Eben Al Habeeb, 50-1 Cregg House, Triona's Hope
1998: Edelweis D Moulin 6 11 12 P Carberry 8-11 fav (G Richards) 5 ran

FORM VERDICT

POTENTATE could probably fall, remount and still win this and he cannot be opposed even at ludicrously short odds. If he gets round in one piece, he wins.

4.25 TARVIN STANDARD NATIONAL HUNT FLAT RACE (CLASS H) £1,750 added 2m Penalty Value £1,495

1 12 BACCARAT (29) (D) (BF) (Lady Lloyd Webber) J FitzGerald 5 11 11 ... S Durack
2 0 BLUE BUD (21) (R Burridge) J FitzGerald 5 11 4 ... G Lee
3 GO MAN (J E Potter) P Evans 5 11 4 ... J P Spencer
4 GRANIT D'ESTRUVAL (FR) (Goff Foods Ltd) F Murphy 5 11 4 ... Mr J P McNamara (5)
5 2 GREEN ICE (266) (Harlow Bros Ltd) J Mackie 5 11 4 ... E Husband
6 6 JUDAIC WAYS (35) (D Sandells & Mr T Broderick) J Jefferson 5 11 4 ... T Siddall (5)
7 0 JUST JOSHUA (21) (Mrs A P Stead) P Beaumont 5 11 4 ... B Grattan (3)
8 63 LAMBRINI MAN (11) (Halewood International Ltd) D McCain 5 11 4 ... A C Coyle (5)
9 LANGHOLM VENTURE (Ashleybank Investments) N Richards 6 11 4 ... Mr J Crowley (5)
10 R SIR ROBBO (7) (Dran Logistics) N Twiston-Davies 5 11 4 ... Mr A Evans (7)
11 PP- THATCHING LAD (377) (Equiname Ltd) D Eddy 6 11 4 ... R Widger (5) B
12 TOP OF THE SNOBS (P Bamford) Mrs G Rees 5 11 4 ... Michael Brennan
13 WOODLANDS STAR (Mrs R Wormall) J Wormall 5 11 4 ... Miss J Wormall (7)
14 06 CROMWELL (11) (GB Racing) M Chapman 4 10 8 ... R Studholme (5)
15 FLASHANT (A Bayman) M Meagher 4 10 8 ... Mr N Fehily (7)
16 GOOD HEART (T P Tate) T Tate 4 10 8 ... L Cooper (7)
– 16 declared –

BETTING: 9-4 Baccarat, 11-2 Langholm Venture, 7-1 Granit d'Estruval, Good Heart, 8-1 Green Ice, 12-1 Judaic Ways, Lambrini Man, Sir Robbo, Go Man, 16-1 others
1998: King's Road 5 10 11 M Keighley (7) 6-1 (N Twiston-Davies) 19 ran

FORM VERDICT

BACCARAT sets a decent standard here and is the one to beat, though he would be vulnerable under his penalty to a useful rival and there are some interesting alternatives. Granit D'Estruval, Langholm Venture and Good Heart are all worth noting in the market, while Sir Robbo is another to consider.

KEMPTON

HYPERION
2.00 Lake Kariba
2.35 Renzo
3.05 Makounji
3.35 Katarino
4.10 Chief's Song
4.40 Lord Jim
5.15 Scarlet Emperor

GOING: Good (Good to Firm in places).
■ Right-hand course. Practically flat. Run-in of 200yd.
■ Course is on A308 at Sunbury. Kempton Park railway station adjoins course. ADMISSION: Club £16 (Juniors (17 to 21-year-olds £8); Grandstand £10; Silver Ring £5. Accompanied children under-16 free. Parking: Members car park £5 (limited and must be pre-booked). CAR PARK: Members £2; remainder, free.

FIVE-YEAR STATISTICS
■ LEADING TRAINERS: D Nicholson 22-75 (29.3%), N Henderson 16-83 (19.3%), R Alner 15-44 (34.1%), P Nicholls 11-34 (32.4%), N Twiston-Davies 11-65 (16.9%).
■ LEADING JOCKEYS: M A Fitzgerald 28-131 (21.4%), J Osborne 23-81 (28.4%), A Maguire 21-85 (24.7%), R Dunwoody 20-99 (20.2%), A Thornton 19-56 (33.9%).
■ FAVOURITES: 128-315 (40.6%).
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: None.

2.00 JACK JOSEPH 80TH BIRTHDAY EMBLEM CHASE (CLASS B) £12,000 added 2m Penalty Value £8,208

1 1F104- KADASTROF (FR) (329) (CD) (A P Paton) R Dickin 9 12 0 ... J Culloty
2 -21545 LAKE KARIBA (7) (D) (P Barber, A Coburn, T Curry, D Millar) P Nicholls 8 12 0 ... J Tizzard
3 1-55P SUPER TACTICS (63) (CD) (H V Perry) R Alner 11 12 0 ... A Thornton
4 21P/2- AEDEAN (474) (D) (The Aedean Partnership) G Enright 10 11 0 ... R Thornton
5 500/0P CLASSIC IMAGE (24) (D) (H J Manners) H Manners 9 11 0 ... O Burrows
6 5-0230 NASHVILLE STAR (USA) (12) (D) (Robin Mathew) R Mathew 8 11 0 ... C Llewellyn V
– 6 declared –

BETTING: 6-4 Lake Kariba, 2-1 Super Tactics, 5-2 Kadastrof, 66-1 others
1998: Kadastrof 8 11 0 A Thornton 4-11 fav (R Dickin) 4 ran

FORM VERDICT

All three principals like to go off in front so there will be no hanging about. Kadastrof has a stiff task at the weights but there is very little between Lake Kariba and SUPER TACTICS on official marks. At his very best, Lake Kariba should win but he is none too consistent and for that reason, and the fact that he goes really well at this track, Super Tactics is preferred.

2.35 WEEKENDER DOVECOTE NOVICE HURDLE (Grade 2) (A) £15,000 added 2m £9,465 C4

1 0-1166 ALHOSAAM (15) (Nick Clark) G L Moore 5 11 10 ... P Hide
white, red stripe, diabolo on sleeves, striped cap
2 1F22 RENZO (7) (D) (Cleartherm Ltd) J L Harris 6 11 10 ... D Gallagher
red, black sash, white sleeves, red stars, black and red hooped cap
3 31I214 DAVOSKI (35) (CD) (Robert Ogden) Miss V Williams 5 11 7 ... R Dunwoody
mauve and pink check, white sleeves
4 23-121 PREMIER GENERATION (58) (D) (F. Generations) N Henderson 6 11 7 ... M A Fitzgerald
white, royal blue stars, sleeves and stars on cap
5 1-1011 PROMINENT PROFILE (33) (D) (Son Partnership) N Twiston-Davies 6 11 7 ... C Llewellyn
red and royal blue stripes, light blue sleeves, red and royal blue quartered cap
6 42 LEGENDARY LOVER (29) (BF) (Come Racing Ltd) J Jenkins 5 11 3 ... J Osborne
yellow, purple star, yellow and dark green striped sleeves, purple cap
7 BLUE MUSIC (F136) (Jack Joseph) P Hobbs 4 10 7 ... J Goldstein
royal blue, red spots, black cap, white spots
– 7 declared –

BETTING: 13-8 Prominent Profile, 5-2 Davoski, 9-2 Renzo, 5-1 Premier Generation, 14-1 Alhosaam, 16-1 Legendary Lover, 50-1 Blue Music
1998: Buddy Marvel 4 11 0 R Dunwoody 10-3 (O Sherwood) 6 ran

FORM GUIDE

Alhosaam: Has won at Fontwell and Taunton. Much stiffer task today, much too stiff judged on his 14½ lengths sixth of 8 to Grecian Dart here (2m, soft) on Boxing Day
Renzo: Impressive at Ascot (2m, soft) in November. Much stiffer tasks since, but might have troubled 9-length winner Buckside at Ascot last week except for jumping errors
Davoski: Won at three minor tracks before beating Magic Circle 10 lengths over C&D in January. Good fourth to Tiutchev in £21,000 handicap 5 weeks ago, again on soft
Premier Generation: Won novice events at Cheltenham (handicap: 2m, good) and Warwick, latter at 11-10 by 3 lengths from Arctic Fancy. Has to improve again
Prominent Profile: Won bumpers at Cheltenham and Chepstow, latter a useful race in good style. Ground again very testing when he beat Master Pilgrim 10 lengths on hurdling debut at Wetherby (2m4f). Highly promising, but 2m looks shorter than ideal
Legendary Lover: Fair maiden on Flat in 1997. Promising 14½ lengths fourth of 13 to Davoski here (2m, heavy) in January. Below that form at Folkestone 16 days later
Blue Music: 4yo by Keen. Won two modest handicaps (1m2f and 1m4f) in Ireland last year for Declan Gillespie. Bought for 13,000 guineas in October

VERDICT: PROMINENT PROFILE is surely the best in this field, likely to take high rank among the season's novices, and he must be the form selection despite having given the strong impression that he will prove best over markedly longer distances than this. Chief threats Renzo and Davoski may well be on the upgrade, but their form also comes from soft-ground events. The latter is 17lb better off for his 4½ length beating by Premier Generation on good going at Cheltenham in November.

3.05 MITSUBISHI SHOGUN PENDIL TROPHY NOVICE CHASE (Grade 2) (A) £20,000 2m 4f 110yds £12,380 C4

1 11132 NO RETREAT (NZ) (21) (D) (M W & A N Harris) S Brookshaw 6 11 10 ... W Marston
maroon and grey (quartered), maroon sleeves, grey armlets
2 11134 KING OF SPARTA (21) (D) (Mrs Richard Tice) J Portman 6 11 7 ... J Osborne
dark green and yellow stripes, dark green sleeves, quartered cap
3 20-430 STAR RAGE (F7) (J David Abell) D Elsworth 9 11 3 ... P Holley
white, light blue spots, white sleeves, light blue cap, white spots
4 -03F11 MAKOUNJI (FR) (15) (D) (Robert Waley-Cohen) N Henderson 5 10 2 ... M A Fitzgerald
brown, orange sleeves, quartered cap
– 4 declared –

BETTING: 4-7 Makounji, 7-2 No Retreat, 9-2 King Of Sparta, 12-1 Star Rage
1998: Stormy Passage 8 11 3 R Dunwoody 11-8 fav (P Hobbs) 4 ran

FORM GUIDE

No Retreat: Easily made all at Newbury (good) and Newcastle. Had excuse penultimate start before 3½ lengths second to Hoh Express at Sandown. All races at 2m4f
King Of Sparta: Has won 7 races over fences at around 2m4f, but limitations exposed (22 lengths behind runner-up No Retreat) in Grade 1 at Sandown latest start
Star Rage: Won on Flat 7 days ago. Chances on his smart hurdles form, but a lot to find on two chasing efforts (12½ lengths third to Mountain Storm here) in November
Makounji: Easily beat Cherrymore at Leicester (2m4f, soft) before surging clear from Potentate on run-in at Newbury (2m1f, good to soft), jumping well on both occasions

VERDICT: Receiving lumps of weight for her age and sex, the smart French import MAKOUNJI will be extremely hard to beat. The sound-jumping New Zealander No Retreat is the one most likely to benefit should the favourite suffer any mishap.

3.35 VOICE NEWSPAPER ADONIS HURDLE (Grade 2) (A) £15,000 4YO 2m Penalty Value £9,555 C4

1 4P-311 KATARINO (FR) (105) (D) (Robert Waley-Cohen) N Henderson 11 6 ... M A Fitzgerald
brown, orange sleeves, quartered cap
2 1U SCARLET PIMPERNEL (15) (CD) (Richard Hambro) N Twiston-Davies 11 2 ... C Llewellyn
pink, dark blue seams, pink cap
3 40 CHIEF CASHIER (28) (Surgical Spirits) G Balding 10 12 ... B Fenton
white, large red spots, hooped sleeves, red cap
4 5 KASID (21) (C L Sturgeon & Mrs P A Sturgeon) C Mann 10 12 ... J Magee
dark blue, yellow seams, diamonds on sleeves, yellow cap, dark blue diamond
5 P113 TEMPER LAD (USA) (133) (D) (Jack Joseph) P Hobbs 10 12 ... R Dunwoody
royal blue, red spots, black cap, white spots
6 035 TOMMY CARSON (7) (DGH Partnership) D Elsworth 10 12 ... P Holley
red and white (halved), diabolo on sleeves, quartered cap
– 6 declared –

BETTING: 2-5 Katarino, 9-4 Scarlet Pimpernel, 25-1 Temper Lad, Tommy Carson, 50-1 others
1998: Fataliste 4 11 6 A P McCoy 3-1 (M Pipe) 5 ran

FORM GUIDE

Katarino: Won at Newbury (2m1f, good) on British debut by 10 lengths. Followed up by 11 from Simply Gifted at Cheltenham (good to soft) 4 days later, making all with striking performance that put him at the head of betting for the Triumph Hurdle
Scarlet Pimpernel: Beat Nuvellino by 5 lengths over C&D (heavy) on British debut. Would also have beaten Quel Senor at Newbury (good to soft) but for unseating his rider with a most awkward leap (kept jumping left up the straight) at the last
Chief Cashier: Fairly useful on Flat. Some promise, though beaten long way, in the mud at Chepstow on hurdling debut, but poor effort at Doncaster four weeks later
Kasid: Ran in two Flat maidens for Dermot Weld. Sold 16,000 guineas. Well-beaten fifth of 7 over hurdles at Sandown, bumped on final turn and soon finding little
Temper Lad: Won on sound surface at Stratford and Huntingdon. Better form 8½ lengths behind Miss Orphan over C&D (good to soft) in October, but not seen since
Tommy Carson: Visored, 8 lengths third to Zapalasdo at Sandown (2m, good to soft). Kasid well back in fifth. A straggler in much stronger race at Ascot last week

VERDICT: Triumph Hurdle favourite KATARINO can underline those Cheltenham Festival claims by maintaining his unbeaten record in Britain. Scarlet Pimpernel, the only possible threat on form, has lots of talent but failed to keep company with his jockey when taking his hurdles in a most wayward fashion at Newbury last time.

4.10 RACING POST HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS A) £60,000 added 3m Penalty Value £35,700 C4

1 -4043D CHALLENGER DU LUC (FR) (7) (D) (D A Johnson) M Pipe 9 11 10 ... G Tormey B
royal blue, emerald green sleeves, white cap, emerald green spots
2 1P-P3P UNGUIDED MISSILE (70) (D) (D E Harrison) N Richards 11 11 9 ... G Bradley
light blue, royal blue triple diamond, diamonds on sleeves and cap
3 -63411 DR LEUNT (28) (CD) (Peter Emery) P Hobbs 8 11 5 ... R Dunwoody
white, dark blue stripe, dark blue sleeves, yellow armlets, white cap
4 112322 MR STRONG GALE (28) (C) (D) (T Chappell, R Eddy) P Nicholls 8 11 0 ... J Tizzard B
dark green, black sash, dark green sleeves, red armlets, black and red check cap
5 -0U415 PHILIP'S WOODY (70) (B R Wilsdon) N Henderson 11 10 8 ... M A Fitzgerald
red, brown hoop, striped sleeves
6 132-13 EVEN FLOW (28) (C) (A T A Wates) T Casey 10 10 8 ... J Osborne
navy blue, green sash, cerise cap
7 PP4312 THE LAND AGENT (36) (BF) (D I Bare) J Mullins 8 10 7 ... A Thornton
brown, white hoop, hooped sleeves, orange cap
8 122036 CHIEF'S SONG (7) (C) (Mrs Anne Devine) S Dow 9 10 5 ... C Llewellyn
purple, yellow sash, halved sleeves, black cap, yellow spots
9 /1221- BITOFAMIXUP (296) (D) (Mike Roberts) M J Roberts 8 10 4 ... Mr R Forristal (5)
dark blue, light blue stars, dark blue and red hooped sleeves and cap
– 9 declared –

BETTING: 11-4 Dr Leunt, 7-2 Mr Strong Gale, 9-2 Even Flow, 13-2 The Land Agent, 8-1 Bitofamixup, 10-1 Challenger Du Luc, 12-1 Unguided Missile, 20-1 Philip's Woody, Chief's Song
1998: Super Tactics 10 10 10 A Thornton 4-1 (R Alner) 7 ran

FORM GUIDE

Challenger du Luc: Faint-hearted runner-up in the 1997 King George over C&D. Clearly best effort since when 4½ lengths third to Teeton Mill at Ascot (2m4f) last week
Unguided Missile: Best on sound surface, winning at Cheltenham (3m1f, good: his main target again) last March off this mark. Has not had ground to suit this term
Dr Leunt: In excellent form, wide-margin winner on soft ground in small fields at Kempton (3m) and Cheltenham (2m4f; from in-form Storm Damage). 9lb higher now than for latest win. Also effective on good ground. Clearly a leading contender
Mr Strong Gale: Progressive efforts to be placed in top handicaps at Cheltenham (2) and Doncaster last three starts. Appeared to have race sewn up on the run-in at Doncaster (3m, good to soft) but then idled and let in Major Bell. 5lb higher here
Philip's Woody: Goes well on a sound surface, but best form over shorter distances (has not won beyond 2m5½f). Won four-runner race at Doncaster in December
Even Flow: Four times a winner at around 2m4f here, including in 3-runner race in December. Third to Unguided Missile at Cheltenham appeared to show that he stayed 3m, but ran badly (patchy in coat, jumped poorly) behind Dr Leunt there last time
The Land Agent: Often faces stiff tasks, but beat below-par rivals well at Wincanton (2m5f, soft) in January. Creditable run next time. First try at 3m, but should stay
Chief's Song: Tough and consistent, often pitted against very smart rivals (badly hampered when 50-1 at Ascot last week). Having his first outing at 3m and has had most of his races at 2m, but shapes nowadays as if well suited by at least 2m4f
Bitofamixup: In first two in 8 of 9 starts in hunter/novice chases, 1½ lengths second to Paperising at Ayr (3m1f, good to firm). Promising, but making seasonal debut

VERDICT: Last year's renewal, when sent off the 6-4 favourite, was one of the most ignominious in a growing list of failures from Challenger Du Luc, who would probably win this on his best form. Passing him over, it is hard to get away from the in-form duo of Dr Leunt and MR STRONG GALE, the latter gaining narrow preference. Even Flow has shaped on several occasions as if capable of pulling off a big prize such as this, but his latest effort really was a poor one. The Land Agent and Chief's Song cannot be written off although they are stepping up in trip, but both Unguided Missile and Bitofamixup may be seen to better effect at Cheltenham next month.

4.40 MONEY STORE RENDLESHAM LIMITED H'CAP HURDLE (Grade 2) (A) £20,000 3m 110yds £12,224 C4

1 2U-44 PRIDWELL (35) (D) (Jones, Berstock and Fleet Partnership) M Pipe 9 11 7 ... R Dunwoody
yellow, black inverted triangle, black sleeves, light blue diamonds, black cap
2 122133 OCEAN HAWK (57) (CD) (M Archer & Miss J Broadhurst) N T-Davies 7 10 11 ... C Llewellyn
light blue, maroon chevron, halved sleeves, light blue and maroon quartered cap
3 1/45P3 PHARANEAR (35) (CD) (Stainless Threaded Fasteners) D Nicholson 9 10 7 ... R Thornton
red, black chevrons, white sleeves, red armlets, red and black striped cap
4 132/05 ANZUM (28) (The Old Foresters Partnership) D Nicholson 8 10 7 ... R Massey
dark blue and yellow stripes, white sleeves and cap
5 111-P LORD JIM (57) (D) (Mrs S Y Thomas) J Old 7 10 7 ... M A Fitzgerald
purple, yellow diamonds on sleeves, quartered cap
6 1P6523 DOM BELTRANO (FR) (15) (D) (Carl Wright) N Twiston-Davies 7 10 7 ... W Marston
light blue, pink and purple stripes, pink sleeves
7 1360-4 IVOR'S FLUTTER (63) (W I M Perry) D Elsworth 10 10 7 ... G Bradley
yellow, dark green hoop and armlets, check cap
8 310303 SULAWESI (35) (C) (Jack Joseph) N Twiston-Davies 6 10 7 ... J Goldstein (3)
royal blue, red spots, black cap, white spots
– 8 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st 7lb. True handicap weights: Pharanear, Anzum 10st, Lord Jim 9st 6lb, Dom Beltrano 8st 10lb, Ivor's Flutter 8st 5lb, Sulawesi 7st 9lb.
BETTING: 3-1 Pridwell, 7-2 Pharanear, 9-2 Dom Beltrano, 5-1 Ocean Hawk, Ivor's Flutter, 10-1 Anzum, 12-1 Lord Jim, 25-1 Sulawesi
1998: Buckhouse Boy 8 10 12 A Thornton 10-3 (D Nicholson) 6 ran

FORM GUIDE

Pridwell: The form choice after his plucky win over Istabraq at Aintree (2m4f, heavy) in April, but backward and well below his best in two runs this term. Stays 3m
Ocean Hawk: Dour stayer who rallied to get third in Grade 1 at Cheltenham last March (3m1f, good). Below form this term and this may not be a sufficient test of stamina
Pharanear: Won this in 1997. Missed last term and not so good as he was judged on four runs this term. Fine chance if improving on that. Effective on sound surface
Anzum: Another who missed last season through injury. Has failed to figure in two good races this term, and might need it soft anyway even if back to his best
Lord Jim: Game winner at Chepstow, Cheltenham and Sandown last term, looking a good staying prospect. Poor reappearance effort was down to pulled muscles
Dom Beltrano: In good form, unlike nearly all of his rivals. Placed in 3m1f handicaps at Uttoxeter and Newbury (to Flying Gunner) on soft surface last two starts
Ivor's Flutter: Come-from-behind handicapper, winner of novice event at Ascot (2m4f, soft) last January. Stayer on Flat but below form on three tries at 3m over hurdles
Sulawesi: Mostly in good form this term, but at hugely lower level. Got well behind before coming third to Teaatral here (2m5f) last time, and 3m will suit him better

VERDICT: All except PRIDWELL and Ocean Hawk are out of the handicap proper, and by 7lb and upwards. This track without testing ground does not look an ideal test for Ocean Hawk, who so often gets going too late, so Pridwell is given the benefit of the doubt after his two ring-rusty efforts this season. Pharanear is the chief danger from among the rest on form, but Lord Jim still has potential.

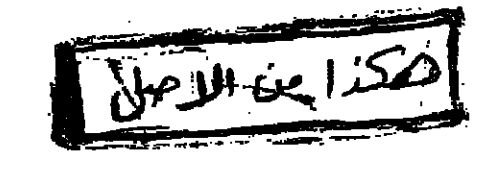
5.15 KEMPTON STANDARD OPEN NATIONAL HUNT FLAT RACE (CLASS H) £1,750 added 2m Penalty Value £1,473

1 15 SCARLET EMPEROR (61) (D) (BF) (Robert Hitchins) Mrs J Pitman 5 11 11 ... R Dunwoody
2 CAPTAIN DEE CEE (Uplands Bloodstock) S Sherwood 5 11 4 ... G Bradley
3 43 NO TALE TO TELL (79) (Mrs M A Powis) D Nicholson 5 11 4 ... R Massey
4 40 ROLLER BLADE (59) (Mrs J Mould) N Twiston-Davies 5 11 4 ... C Llewellyn
5 00-0 TURN OF THE TIDE (14) (Piers Butler) N Mitchell 6 11 4 ... G Upton
6 000- THE BIZZ (278) (J F Panvert) J Panvert 6 10 13 ... M Batchelor (5)
7 BOATSWAIN (Mrs Joyce Wood) K Bell 4 10 8 ... J Magee
8 DAWN RAIDER (Mrs Gill Oakley) P Hedger 4 10 8 ... L Aspell
9 USK VALLEY (Peter Oldfield) P R Webber 4 10 8 ... J Osborne
10 SANCTUS LADY (N Clement) N Clement (Fr) 4 10 3 ... T Doumen
– 10 declared –

BETTING: 4-5 Scarlet Emperor, 5-1 Usk Valley, 13-2 Sanctus Lady, 8-1 No Tale To Tell, 10-1 Captain Dee Cee, 16-1 Dawn Raider, 25-1 Roller Blade, 33-1 others
1998: North Tune 4 10 8 A Thornton 8-1 (R Alner) 13 ran

FORM VERDICT

The weight-for-age scale favours the four-year-olds (who receive 4lb more from their seniors than if the race was run under Flat rules) – Usk Valley and Sanctus Lady are potentially very interesting newcomers – but the value could be with the experience and proven ability of SCARLET EMPEROR. Jenny Pitman's gelding looked distinctly out of the ordinary first time out and may be best forgiven his subsequent failure in desperate ground.



'El Gato' slams door on Norman

GOLF

BY ANDY FARRELL
in Carlsbad, California

IT IS a precarious business holding a ticket for a reserved seat around the 18th green at a matchplay tournament. Matches can easily end out in the country but, on Thursday at La Costa, the 18th was the only place to be. While the upsets continued in the second round of the Andersen Consulting World Matchplay Championship, the drama level upped considerably.

Within moments there were two approach shots played at the last that will enter folklore, should this new event ever take a place its place in history. There was one theory abounding that a tournament does not take on true significance unless Greg Norman has blown a certain victory, by which yardstick this event is well on the way to becoming the fifth major.

Norman, who has lost playoffs for all four majors and has had as many titles ripped away from him as he has had handed on a plate, was at it again in his second-round match against Eduardo Romero.

The Argentinian, known as 'El Gato', should have been devoured by the Shark when Norman was three up with four to play. The Australian, in fact, had led from the very first hole and it looked as if Romero's sole contribution to the event was to be knocking out Lee Westwood on Wednesday.

No doubt if Romero and Norman had been playing in the final group of, say, the third round of a regular strokeplay tournament, Romero would have gone quiet, perhaps hoping to get on a roll the following day. But, there being no tomorrow for the loser, Romero had no option but to go on all-out attack. He birdied the 15th to get one hole back and then was handed another when Norman bogeyed the next.

The 17th was halved in parfives which meant Romero came to the last one down. For his second shot, Romero had 169 yards to the flag into the wind. His seven-iron finished a foot from the hole and the birdie took the match into extra time. The 44-year-old from Cordoba, a veteran of the European tour, had a hole-in-one at the Qatar Masters a week ago which he described as "the best shot of my life" but he has swiftly had to upgrade the designation. "It had a little fade, left-to-right, perfect, perfect," Romero said.

"That shot was as good as any I have seen," added Norman. The Australian almost lost the contest at the second extra hole when his drive hit a cart path and bounced out of bounds but Romero missed his par putt. Faced with a 20-foot putt for birdie at the short third, Romero had no further mistake.

"I am very happy," Romero said. "You never know in matchplay what is coming on. I am a very hard guy when playing the matchplay. I have beaten two very good players and have a lot of confidence." The further he can progress in the tournament, the better his chances of reaching the top 50 in the world and an invitation to the US Masters. "It is my dream to play in the Masters. I have never played there so it would be fantastic."

Patrik Sjoland could also be making his debut at Augusta and, later in the year, at the Ryder Cup. The Swede will pick up a generous helping of qualifying points after beating Carlos Franco in the second round with anoth..r dramatic comeback. Sjoland was three down with seven to play before producing a remarkable spell of ball-striking.

Sjoland hit a seven-iron to 18 inches to win the 12th, a nine-iron to three feet to win the 15th, squared the match by holing from 20 feet at the 17th and hit a six-iron from 170 yards to less than a foot at the last, a shot every bit as good as Romero's. "I just can't believe it," the 27-year-old Swede said. "That stretch is definitely the best I have ever played. I knew it would take my best golf ever over the last seven holes to win and I managed it."

Bernhard Langer and Jose Maria Olazabal also made it through to the third round for Europe but Tiger Woods, remarkably, was the only top-10 seed to make it. Woods only did so in another dramatic finish at the 18th, when Bob Tway missed a seven-footer to extend the match.

But the pretender to Woods' world No 1 crown, David Duval, was removed by Bill Glasson, 2 and 1. Duval, who last month shot a 59 to win his second tournament in a row, was never ahead and missed from eight foot for a par on the 17th to get the game alive.

"I didn't play particularly well and you get what you deserve when you don't play well," Duval said. He will take the next three weeks off, which will probably include his favourite relaxing pastime of snowboarding in the Idaho mountains.

"Everybody knows I'm not the biggest proponent of this format but beyond that I don't want to say anything because it makes me sound like I'm crying and I'm not. I got beaten and that is all there is to it."

SECOND-ROUND SCORES

US unless stated
Higher-ranked player listed first

V Singh (Fiji) lost to B Langer (Ger) 2 and 1
N Price (Zim) lost to J Maggert 1 hole
J Leonard lost to S Maruyama (Japan) 4 and 2
P Azinger, lost to L Roberts 2 and 1
P Mickelson bt L Janzen 2 and 1
C Stadler lost to J Huston 2 and 1
C Parry (Aus) lost to S Cink 3 and 2
P Sjoland (Swe) bt C Franco (Par) 1 hole
E Romero (Arg) bt G Norman (Aus) at 21st
D Duval lost to B Glasson 2 and 1
T Woods bt B Tway 1 hole
A Magee bt T Bjorn (Den) 2 and 1
S Pate bt B Jobe 1 hole
S Jones bt S Verplank 5 and 4
F Couples bt S Hoch 1 hole
M Bradley lost J M Olazabal (Sp) 2 and 1



Justin Leonard feels for a heartbeat after Japan's Shigeki Maruyama had coolly outwitted the American in Carlsbad on Thursday *Allsport*

Dunne ready to go on Holiday

BOXING

BY GLYN LEACH

LIVE BOXING returns to a Saturday night ITV slot for only the second time in four years tonight – and the network hopes there will be no repeat of the comedy of errors that marred last October's broadcast from Liverpool.

That night, a board beneath the ring canvas came loose, providing a work surface more treacherous than anything featured on *Match of the Day's* simultaneous transmission (Stamford Bridge notwithstanding).

But boxing is a proven winner in the TV ratings war and while the 10 million-plus viewing figures of Chris Eubank, Nigel Benn and Naseem Hamed remain a distant dream, ITV sees the three million who tuned into Shea Neary's World Boxing Union light-welterweight (10 stone) title defence last autumn as an encouraging base.

The network's association with the Liverpool promoters, Munro-Hyland Brothers, and the Norfolk-based WBU is based on solid matchmaking rather than star names, a trend continued this evening when Colin Dunne defends his WBU lightweight (9st 9lb) title against South Africa's Phillip Holiday.

Dunne's "Dynamo" nickname sums him up, while "No Deal" perfectly describes the uncompromising manner of Holiday, a former International Boxing Federation champion thought to be the world's premier lightweight until he met boxing's best body-puncher, Sugar Shane Mosley. But Holiday's only defeat in 35 fights remains the one occasion that an opponent has survived 12 rounds with the Californian.

Tonight will mark Dunne's 20th appearance at Bethnal Green's York Hall, but venue-familiarity is unlikely to help the transplanted Scouser against his most experienced opponent to date. The workrate of Holiday, a part-time triathlete, should allow him to edge an exciting encounter on points.

Also tonight, the East London middleweight, Jason Matthews, travels to Oldham in search of his first major title when he challenges Sheffield's seasoned Paul "Silky" Jones, the Commonwealth champion, on a Frank Warren promotion televised by Sky. But the former World Boxing Organisation champion Jones should be too varied for the "Method Man" from Hackney and should retain his title on points.

Tough task for Saints

RUGBY LEAGUE

BY DAVE HADFIELD

IF ELLERY HANLEY has a mantra as a coach, it is mental toughness. His side, St Helens, will have to show an abundance of that quality if they are to survive their Silk Cut Challenge Cup fifth-round tie at Leeds this afternoon.

Hanley has shown one sort of toughness by leaving out his best winger, Anthony Sullivan, obviously displeased at his being given permission by the club to play rugby union for Wales A recently. It is a surprising and potentially damaging decision, especially as there could still be sufficient doubt over the fitness of Kevin Iro for him to be named as a substitute.

Saints will need all the potential match-winners they can muster against a side that showed the depth of character and determination that Leeds did against Wigan in the last round.

That seemed to mark a step forward on even last season's form – and certainly on the Leeds side Hanley once captained. No one could have set a more pointed example as player and unofficial part-time coach. The difference now is that the mental toughness is institutional rather than individual.

Tomorrow's ties represent a first serious test for two more clubs with reason to think that this could be the season when they turn the corner.

Malcolm Reilly will already have transformed attitudes at Huddersfield, last season's bottom club in Super League, and the word is that Bobbie Goulding, a player who needs a firm hand if ever there was one, has been one of the main beneficiaries.

They have a tricky task, however, against a revamped Salford side that will have drawn great encouragement from the style in which they dispatched the Cup-holders, Sheffield, in the last round.

There is also a buzz at Warrington, their financial problems now behind them and a squad on board that looks high on quality if not on numbers.

Their coach, Darryl van de Velde, does not share the suspicion that their opponents, Halifax, might have peaked last season.

"They did very well last year to finish third, but their best football could be in front of them. They have been a very consistent side and they have bought well," he said.

There will be what their coach, Andy Kelly, admits will be a "weird atmosphere" at Wakefield, where a good three-quarters of the tickets have been snapped up by Bradrord supporters.

"To hear them talk, they are bringing 10,000 and will outnumber us by 15 to one," said Kelly. "I'm just looking forward to Belle Vue being full and buzzing, even if it is mainly with their supporters."

Trinity have already suffered one thrashing from the Bulls this year in a pre-season friendly. "But far from demoralising us, that has just encouraged us by showing us what we have to aim for," Kelly said.

He is without long-term injury victims Martyn Holland and Vince Fawcett, but has his captain, Tony Kemp, fit, while Bradford could be without Robbie Paul.

The London Broncos run the danger of being the likeliest victims of an upset. Their tie at Hull KR is the sort of fixture in which they have proved fallible in the past.

Whatever happens there, at least two teams from the Northern Ford Premiership will qualify for the quarter-finals. Two clubs that have won the Cup meet at Widnes, where Leigh are the visitors, while Whitehaven host Oldham in a contest between two that have never been to Wembley.

Road to Timbuktu takes Burns in right direction

RALLYING

RICHARD BURNS thrust his way into the lead of the Safari Rally at the end of a dramatic day in Kenya. Burns, who won the event last year, is nearly 27 seconds ahead of Spain's Carlos Sainz, with fellow Briton Colin McRae well placed in third.

However, the world champion, Tommi Makinen, is more than 13 minutes adrift while team-mate Freddy Loix was lucky to escape serious injury after a crash as Mitsubishi's hopes of a record seventh successive rally victory faltered.

Loix was airlifted to Nairobi hospital after he hit a ditch at 100mph, but escaped with a sore neck after his car ended up upside down on the road.

"He is going to be fine," said the rally's chief medical officer, Dr Sudhir Vinayak. "There are no major injuries."

Loix will stay in hospital overnight as a precautionary measure while co-driver Sven Smeets escaped without injury from the crash on the third stage yesterday.

Burns showed why he was being tipped pre-season as a title favourite with an expert display in the Subaru, having claimed his maiden victory on the Safari 12 months ago in a Mitsubishi. The 28-year-old from Oxford, who has just two championship points from the opening two rallies, took over at the top of the leaderboard on the first stage.

Sainz responded on the next section, but, then on the road to Timbuktu, Burns cut the deficit to less than seven seconds with another fastest time. Burns, who rejoins Subaru as replacement for McRae, then eclipsed Sainz by 53 seconds on the last and longest stage of the day – around 70 miles – to regain the lead. McRae is less than two minutes behind with two days left despite smacking into a rock in his Ford Focus on the dusty, potholed roads south of the capital. "I can't believe that we're still going, because the impact was so large," said McRae, searching for his first points of the campaign. "The Focus must be built like a tank if it can survive that."

McRae's team managed to repair the car at a service halt and the Scot responded with the second fastest time on the final stage to be well in contention for a podium finish.

Makinen was fastest on the last timed section, but is more than 13 minutes adrift and facing a huge task to complete a third victory in succession, which would extend his 13-point lead in the championship.

Finland's triple world champion hit problems on the opening stage when simultaneous punctures to his rear tyres left him stranded for over 10 minutes.

TODAY'S NUMBER

8,500,000

The number of rupees (£75,000) it cost to build a gymnasium for Sri Lanka's top 200 cricketers. The state-of-the-art facility was opened yesterday in Colombo.

SPORTING DIGEST

Williams proves far too powerful for Po

TENNIS

VENUS WILLIAMS opened the defence of her first WTA Tour singles title with a 6-1, 7-6 win over Kimberly Po in the second round of the IGA Superthrift Classic in Oklahoma City.

Williams, runner-up to Jana Novotna in the Faber Grand Prix last week, is ranked No 5 in the world and is top seed in the event she won a year ago.

The third seed, Amanda Coetzer of South Africa, romped past Elena Wagner, of Germany, 6-1, 6-3.

Lilia Osterloh, a qualifier ranked 119th, continued to advance with a 6-4, 6-3 win over Japan's Miho Saeki. Cara Black, of Zimbabwe, also made it into the quarter-finals by beating France's Alexia Dechaume-Ballert 7-6, 7-6.

Williams hit a 116mph ace on the first point of her match and needed just 22 minutes to take the first set, 6-1. The second set was a struggle for Williams as Po broke her serve once and took advantage of five double faults, three of them in the final game that forced the tie-breaker.

"I thought I was going to set a record in the first set," Po said. "I didn't even see her first serve. I had never played her and it took a while for me to adjust. Her movement is a big weapon. She is tall and most players that big don't move well."

Williams, who meets Alexandra Stevenson in the quarter-finals, was pleased with the win. "Kim hits the ball flat and low and that is out of my [strike] zone." Williams is the only seeded player left in her side of the draw while Coetzer, the second seed, Anna Kournikova, and fifth seeded Chanda Rubin are all in the other half.

Venus and her sister Serena were among 10 players selected to the US Fed Cup team by captain Billie-Jean King. Lindsay Davenport will play in the first-round Fed Cup match against Croatia on 17 and 18 April.

ATHLETICS

STOCKHOLM INDOOR MEETING (Swe) (Thursday) MEN: 60m: 1 E Nkansah (Gha) 6.58sec. 2 D Aliu (Nigeria) 6:61; 3 S Emmanuel (Nigeria) 6·64 **400m A:** 1 C Postinger (Aut) 46.77. 2 S Bada (Nigeria) 47.23. 3 J Stafstedt (Swe) 47.93. **400m B:** 1 R Martin (Jam) 46.73; 2 M McDonald (Jam) 46.90; 3 S Wariso (GB) 46.97 **800m:** 1 N Tellez (Cuba) 1 47.02; 2 R Chirchir (Ken) 1.47 12; 3 V Rodal (Nor) 1·47.20 **1500m:** 1 L Rotich (Ken) 3.33·39; 2 D Lelei (Ken) 3.39:20; 3 A Hakimi (Tun) 3.39.52. **3,000m:** 1 P Bitok (Ken) 7.49 12; 2 E Gourche Abdelhak (Mor) 7.51:78; 3 V Ferdinando (It) 7 51·98 **60m hurdles:** 1 C Hawkins (US) 7.54; 2 A Garcia (Cuba) 7.56; 3 D Ross (US) 7:62. **High jump:** 1 J Sotomayor (Cuba) 2 32m; 2 S Holm (Swe) 2.29; 3 M Buss (Ger) 2.26. **Long jump:** 1 I Pedroso (Cuba) 8.34m. 2 J Beckford (Jam) 8 31; 3 G Cankar (Slovak) 7.92 **WOMEN: 60m:** 1 G Devers (US) 7.03; 2 S Fynes (Baham) 7.07. 3 P Mensah (Can) 7:19 **400m:** 1 S Richards (Jam) 52:30; 2 U Urbansky (Ger) 52·96; 3 O Afolabi (Nigeria) 52:96. **1,000m:** 1 M Mutola (Moz) 2·30 94 *(world record)*; 2 L Mikhaylova (Rus) 2·37 31; 3 Y Buzhenko (Ukr) 2.37 87 **Long jump:** 1 M Christova (Bul) 6.36m. 2 C Johansson (Swe) 6 35; 3 Z Ajkler (Hun) 6.30 **Pole vault:** 1 N Humbert (Ger) 4.56m *(world record)*. 2 Z Szabo (Hun) 4.41; 3 T Elisdottir (Ice) 4.31.

BADMINTON

WORLD GRAND PRIX (Brunei) Finals: Men's singles: Group A: P G Christensen (Den) bt Chen Gang (Ch) 15-6 15-7; R Sidek (Malay) bt T Johansson (Swe) 15-12 13-15 15-6. **Group B:** Luo Yigang (Ch) bt Ong Ewe Hock (Malay) 15-4 15-1; H Arbi (Indon) bt K Jonassen (Den) 12-15 15-8 15-6. **Group C:** Yong Hock Kin (Malay) bt H Hendrawan (Indon) 2-15 15-13 15-7. Dong Jiong (Ch) bt J van Dijk (Neth) 15-4 15-2. **Group D:** B Santoso (Indon) bt Hashim Roslin (Malay) 15-11 11-15 15-11; Sun Jun (Ch) bt P E Hoyer-Larsen (Den) 15-8 15-5 **Women's singles: Group A:** Ye Zhaoying (Ch) bt K Ericson (Swe) 11-1 11-7. **Group B:** Zhang Ning (Ch) bt Mia Tjiptawan Audina (Indon) 11-2 9-11 11-3. **Group C:** Dai Yun (Ch) bt C Martin (Den) 13-11 11-6. **Group D:** Gong Zhichao (Ch) bt Y Mizui (Japan) 11-6 11-1. **Men's doubles: Group A:** F Lumpele and E Hian (Indon) bt Zhang Wei and Zhang Jun (Ch) 15-12 15-12; R Subagja and R Mainaky (Indon) bt P Axelsson and P G Jonsson (Swe) 15-8 15-5 **Group B:** D Kantono and B A Antonius (Indon) bt J Eriksen and J Larsen (Den) 15-9 15-6; T Gunawan and H Halim (Indon) bt C Hunt and S Archer (Eng) 15-10 15-2 **Women's doubles: Group A:** J Goode and D Kellogg (Eng) bt H Matsuda and Y Iwata (Japan) 15-11 15-5. Fei and Gu Jun (Ch) bt A Jorgensen and M Vange (Den) 15-13 15-8 **Group B:** H Nanyan and Y Wei (Ch) bt H Kirkegaard and P Harder (Den) 15-6 10-15 15-8; M Thomsen and R Olsen (Den) scr N Eliza and D Lomban (Indon) w/o.

BASKETBALL

NBA: Sacramento 115 Washington 105; Indiana 81 Cleveland 74; New York 115 Minnesota 113 (ot); Philadelphia 98 Chicago 80; Dallas 90 Denver 81; Atlanta 93 Houston 87; Phoenix 94 Vancouver 86; LA Lakers 115 LA Clippers 100.

BOWLS

WOMEN'S ALL ENGLAND INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS (Exeter) Singles, First round: A Hill (Mote Park, Maidstone) bt C Northall (Teignbridge) 21-13; M Crane (Clacton) bt E Bessell (Yeovil) 21-19; K Strutt (Egham) bt S Matthews (March) 21-18; C Hiorn (Boston) bt J Green (Dolphin) 21-11; L Thelwell (Handy Cross) bt B Alderson (Thornaby) 21-11; D Hunt (Blackpool Newton Hall) bt A McPherson (Avon Valley) 21-12; S Rickman (King George Field) bt C Ashby (Eastbourne) 21-16. R Barber (Paddington) bt J Roylance (North Walsham) 21-9. **Quarter-finals:** Hill bt Crane 21-17; Hiorn bt Strutt 21-20; Hunt bt Thelwell 21-14; Rickman bt Barber 21-13 **Semi-finals:** C Hiorn (Boston) bt A Hill (Mote Park) 21-5. S Rickman (King George Field) bt D Hunt (Blackpool Newton Hall) 21-9. **Unbadged pairs, first round:** C Anderson and N Ryan (Prince Arthur) bt E Parkes and P Packham (Hartlepool) 28-6; M Ellett and S Harriott (ISCA) bt D Smith and P Hatt (Donyngs) 22-15. A Redhead and S Chilton (York) bt S Dadson and J Sirrell (Rivermead) 24-22. M Trench and D Bantock (Desborough Mardhead) bt J Herrity and S Bissett (Nailsea) 21-15. **Quarter-finals:** R Collett and R Lodar-Smith (Towerlands) bt A Leverett and E Baines (Gallow) 23-21; J Gasson and J Neyes (Wealden) bt C and A Gowshall (Louth) 19-17 *(after extra end)*; G Tardivel and D Rigby (Solent) bt W McMillan and D Wood (David Lloyd Club) 28-14; P Peachey and M Reeve (Bentham) bt V and C Stace (Lawson Park) 25-9.

BOXING

Merseyside's Paul Lloyd is aiming to fight Marco Antonio Barrera, the World Boxing Organisation super-bantamweight champion. Frank Warren, the promoter, is shortly to announce a venue for Lloyd's second world title fight.

CYCLING

Marco Pantani, the Tour de France champion, has criticised this summer's route by claiming that it favours time-trialers. The 29-year-old Italian, who is a natural climber, has added to the doubt surrounding his participation. "I won the tour last year on a course which was not favourable to me. I hoped for a better route this year but it wasn't the case," Pantani said. "The tour is the most important in the world and because of that it must take the riders into account. Without the riders the tour is nothing."

TOUR OF VALENCIA Thursday's Third stage (170km, Puerto de Sagunto to Barrais Pla de Llomes, Spa): 1 M Boogerd (Neth) Rabobank 4hr 38min 37sec. 2 A Vinokourov (Kazak) Casino +2sec. 3 W Belli (It) Festina +5; 4 J Pascual Rodriguez (Sp) Kelme; 5 C M Moller (Den) TVM; 6 S Botero (Col) Kelme; 7 M Bartoli (It) Mapei +20; 8 P Bertiol (It) Mapei; 9 A Kivilev (Kazak) Festina; 10 D Millar (GB) Cofidis all same time. **Overall standings:** 1 Vinokourov 13hr 12min 18sec; 2 Pascual Rodriguez +3sec; 3 Belli, 4 Botero; 5 Moller +16; 6 Boogerd +18; 7 Bartoli +31; 8 Millar s/t.

FOOTBALL

The England Under-21 team will play their next European Championship qualifier against Poland on Friday 26 March at Southampton.

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP Fixture changes: Mon 12 April: Leeds v Liverpool *(from 10 April)*; **Sun 18 April** Chelsea v Leicester; **Mon 19 Apr:** Arsenal v Wimbledon *(both from 17 Apr)*.

THURSDAY'S LATE RESULTS: Avon Insurance Combination First Division: Crystal Palace 0 Ipswich Town 3 *(at Crawley Town)*. **Ryman League Second Division:** Banstead Athletic 2 Metropolitan Police 0. **Vandanel Trophy third round:** Hertford Town 0 Windsor & Eton 2; Marlow 4 Egham Town 0; Thame Utd 1 Southall 32. **Harp Lager National League of Ireland Premier Division:** Dundalk 1 Shamrock Rovers 1.

GOLF

TUSCON OPEN (Arizona) Leading first round scores (US unless stated): 64 RW Eaks. 65 T Scherrer. 66 T Tolles, T Herron, D Donaley, J Kelly. 67 G Hjerstedt (Swe), S Flesch, D Paulson, R Allenby (Aus). 68 P Johansson (Swe), S Lyle (GB), J Gallagher jnr, M Brisky, K Miyamoto (Japan), P Goydos, S Gump, D Toms, PH Horgan, M Weir. 69 K Yokoo (Japan). 70 D Frost (SA), G Waite (NZ). 72 E Toledo (Mex), F Nobilo (NZ). 73 F Allem (SA). 76 B Hughes (Aus).

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S MASTERS (Gold Coast) Leading second round scores: (Aus unless stated): 130 K Webb 63 67. 134 J Crafter 68 66; J Moodie (GB) 67 67. 135 AJ Eathorne (Can) 65 70; L Kane (Can) 68 67; J Geddes (US) 66 69; M Estill (US) 67 68. 137 A Fukushima (Japan) 69 68; B Iverson (US) 69 68; C Yamazaki (Japan) 68 69. 138 J McGill (US) 68 70; A Nicholas (GB) 68 70. 139 H Sakagami (Japan) 70 69; L Weiss (US) 67 72; N Bowen (US) 69 70; N Lowien 67 72; C Koch (Swe) 72 67; E Dahllof (Swe) 69 70. J Lidback (Peru) 69 70; L Philo (US) 71 68. **Other GB:** 140 J Morley 68 72. 141 C Matthew 70 71; H Dobson 72 69. 143 K Marshall 72 71; L Davies 71 72. 145 S Strudwick 75 70. 146 D Reid 70 76.

HOCKEY

EUROPEAN WOMEN'S CLUBS INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIP (Kelvin Hall, Glasgow) First round: Group A: Russelsheimer (Ger) 5 CPCS Moscow (Rus) 4. Siauliai (Lith) 6 Cambrai (Fr) 3. **Group B:** Real Sociedad (Sp) 6 Lokomotiva Raca (Sloven) 4; Slough (Eng) 8 Glasgow Western (Sco) 2.

ICE HOCKEY

NHL: Boston 3 New Jersey 3 (ot); Toronto 4 NY Islanders 1; Ottawa 3 Montreal 1; Pittsburgh 3 Colorado 2.

THURSDAY'S LATE RESULTS: Sekonda Superleague: London Knights 2 Bracknell Bees 6; Nottingham Panthers 2 Manchester Storm 1.

NORDIC SKIING

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS (Ramsau, Aut) Men's 4x10km Cross-country relay: 1 Austria (M Gandler, A Stadlober, M Botwinov, C Hoffmann) 1hr 35min 07.5sec. 2 Norway (E Bjervig, E Jevne, B Daehlie, T Alsgaard) 1:35:07.7; 3 Italy (G Di Centa, F Valbusa, F Maj, S Fauner) 1:36:38.1; 4 Germany (A Schluetter, A Teichmann, J Neuber, M Kirchner) 1:36:53.9; 5 Finland (H Kirvesniemi, M Myllyla, S Repo, J Isometsa) 1:36:56.3; 6 Sweden (A Bergstroem, N Jonsson, P Elofsson, M Fredriksson) 1:37:50.9; 7 Russia (M Ivanov, A Prokurorov, S Kriania, V Vilisov) 1:38:05.6. 8 Czech Republic (L Bauer, V Korunka, J Magal, M Koukal) 1:39:51.3; 9 Switzerland (W Aschwanden, B Koch, P Maechler, P Roelli) 1:40:02.2; 10 Estonia (A Veerpalu, R Olle, M Aasmae, J Mae) 1:40:16.7.

RALLYING

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP THIRD ROUND: SAFARI RALLY (Kenya) Thursday's 1.5-mile special stage: 1 J Kankkunen (Fin) Subaru Impreza 1min 53.4sec; 2 R Burns (GB) Subaru Impreza +01.0sec; 3 C Sainz (Sp) Toyota Corolla +01.1; 4 C McRae (GB) Ford Focus +01.8; 5 P Liatti (It) Seat +02.0. **Yesterday's first leg:** 1 R Burns (GB) Subaru 2hr 50min 6.2sec; 2 C Sainz (Sp) Toyota +26.7sec; 3 C McRae (GB) Ford 1:56.2; 4 D Auriol (Fr) Toyota 6 18.6; 5 T Makinen (Fin) Mitsubishi 13.11.6; 6 P Liatti (It) SEAT 15.28.2; 7 P Solberg (Nor) Ford 19.48.1; 8 I Duncan (Ken) Toyota 21.43.5. 9 H Rovanpera (Fin) SEAT 26.36.2; 10 H Al Wahaibi (Oman) Mitsubishi 27.20 2.

RUGBY UNION

The Five Nations' Championship match between Scotland and Ireland at Murrayfield on Saturday 20 March is a 67,000 sell-out.

Gregori Kacala, Cardiff's Polish No 8, becomes a first-time Barbarian when he plays for the club in the annual Mobbs Memorial match against East Midlands next Wednesday afternoon.

BARBARIANS (v East Midlands, Wednesday): L Criscuolo (Coventry); **G Wyatt** (Pontypridd), **T Walsh** (Henley), **L Calcarius** (Watsonians), **H Thorneycroft** (Northampton); **B Hayward** (Llanelli), **R Moon** (Llanelli); **M Foulds** (Cambridge Univ), **K McKenzie** (Glasgow Caledonians), **S Cronk** (Newport), **G Hayter** (Watsonians), **K Whitley** (Coventry), **R Wainwright** (Watsonians), **G Kacala** (Cardiff), **P Williams** (Cardiff).

SUPER 12 SERIES (Christchurch, NZ): Canterbury Crusaders 48 Waikato Chiefs 3.

SAILING

Britain's quest for the Louis Vuitton Cup this October, to find the challenger for America's Cup 2000, was given a boost this week when a team of boat builders was flown in from New Zealand to the British base in Weymouth.

SKIING

Lasse Kjus, the World Cup leader, has withdrawn from two races scheduled for this weekend because of flu.

SNOOKER

LIVERPOOL VICTORIA CHARITY CHALLENGE (Derby) First round: A McManus (Sco) bt D Taylor (NIrl) 5-1. **Quarter-finals:** J Higgins (Sco) bt S Davis (Eng) 5-0; K Doherty (Irl) bt M Fu (HK) 5-4.

TENNIS

GUARDIAN DIRECT CUP (Battersea) Men's singles quarter-finals: R Krajicek (Neth) bt K Kucera (Slovak) 6-1 6-3; G Rusedski (GB) bt T Enqvist (Sweden) 7-5 4-6 6-3.

SUPERTHRIFT CLASSIC (Oklahoma City): Women's singles second round: V Williams (US) bt K Po (US) 6-1 7-6; A Coetzer (SA) bt E Wagner (Ger) 6-1 6-3; L Osterloh (US) bt M Saeki (Japan) 6-4 6-3; C Black (Zim) bt A Dechaume-Balleret (Fr) 7-6 7-6.

PARIS WOMEN'S INDOOR OPEN: Singles second round: A Cocheteux (Fr) bt I Spirlea (Rom) 6-4 6-2. **Quarter-final:** D Van Roost (Bel) bt E Likhovtseva (Rus) 7-5 6-0; N Dechy (Fr) bt A Cocheteux (Fr) 6-1 4-6 6-1.

By Garnett, out of Hogarth, in the money

CHRIS MAUME

SPORT ON TV



AS RESEARCHER'S jobs go, it can't have been the hardest assignment in the world to locate a bookie who's a bit of a character, but whoever found Barry Dennis for *Modern Times: Bookies Never Lose* (BBC2, Wednesday) still deserves a bonus for unearthing such a corker.

The first glimpse we get of him conveys exactly the right impression. He's bombing down a contorted country lane about the width of a blood vessel, his hand jammed down on the horn. "That's a short cut, that is," he says as he emerges just about unscathed. "Saves 30 seconds. Takes 10 years off your life."

A cross between Alf Garnett and Barbara Windsor's gentleman friend in *EastEnders*, middle-aged Essex man redrawn by Hogarth, Barry is naturally unrepentant about taking the punters' dosh.

"Change money, take prices, and win," he says cheerfully. "That's how easy this game is."

A brush with the coronary artery police warned him off the lifestyle that was killing him. He used to "get up at nine, go to the races, finish at five, into Romford dogs until 10.30, home 10.45. The wife knew there had to be a bottle of scotch, a bottle of lemonade, a big jug of ice, a pound of steak, two fried eggs, pounds and pounds of chips, six slices of bread and butter. I'd knock out the bottle of scotch by half past midnight and go to bed."

Surprise, surprise, "after 15 years of that, in the middle of the night I woke up and felt queasy." Well, yes. Following his doctor's advice saved his life, he reckons, though you suspect the main pillar of his health plan involved his wife consuming more greens. A few minutes later, they're eating together: she nibbles at a rocket salad while he's polishing off a big lump of steak, two fried eggs and pounds and pounds of chips.

He talks about the golden age in the 1950s and 60s, when tipsters did not have the information they do today. "Punters were throwing it away," he says. "I joined in the 70s, the good old days – the XJ10 Jag, mixing with the toffs, St Trop in the summer; skiing twice in the winter. They were the 70s. Now we're in the hard-up 90s."

But not that hard up, despite the film's best efforts to be balanced about protestations of poverty. In the kitchen at home, he explains why he's only minor league: the bread bin's the grandstand, a sliced loaf is Tattersall's, a tomato's the winning post and the cherries are the bookies. Unless you're right at the front you're shafted. He's been waiting 29 years to get one of the prime sites.

There is hope, though, as hereditary pitches are to be abolished, and Barry is desperate for a sniff of the serious money. As one of his colleagues puts it: "What I need is not only all the bookmakers to die but the sons as well. My all-time prayer is something like a terrorist attack at Ascot, or the stand falling in."

"I didn't say that," says Barry, happy for once to be upstaged. "I just hope they all pass away quietly."

Though we see him take seven grand from one race, his wife is unimpressed when he comes home with the wedge. "That's not ours," she says. "It's there to be lost." And a few shots later, as he loses £6,500 – "sorry about that," says one punter as he walks off with three thousand – Barry turns to the camera, happy to be vindicated: "You satisfied?"

He is not above tawdry little stunts like getting his niece and her mate to hang around his pitch dressed in bodypaint – though you wonder how much of it was about putting on a decent show for the telly people. At Royal Ascot he fetches up in a ridiculous all white number, like something left on the cutting room floor by Peter Greenaway. Still, poncey though he looks and entertaining though he is, even he can't surpass the antics of the trashed toffs around him.

"My accountant won't go anymore," he says. "His wife said, 'This is the last time I'm going to Royal Ascot. The last time, we went into the car park and there was a couple fornicating'... That's what happens at Royal Ascot: you go out posh and you come back cockney." Indeed, the sight of Middle England making a paralytic ass of itself is worth a docusoap of its own.

Even better for Barry, in a postscript we learn that being given £250,000 by a "friend", whatever that means, has enabled him to acquire 12 front-line pitches. "We're out of the mire," he says, "we're up and running. There's food on the table tonight. What colour are my trousers?" he asks, turning his backside to the camera. "All right?"

I don't know what odds Barry was giving about Kevin Keegan becoming the new England football coach. After seeing Ghana win last year's Inner City World Cup (*Fusion*, C4, Sunday), it's clear what the FA has to do next to fill the Job From Hell.

The Ghanaians, you see, had six managers. That's not one manager-in-chief and five glorified kit men; it's six gaffers, enjoying equal status and an inability to agree on anything, the team's progress punctuated by bursts of managerial aggro.

"When it gets too much the players get confused," one of them yells, and though it was hard to disagree, it did not stop them beating Bangladesh to take the title. As the winners danced round the pitch, one of the Gang of Six revealed the real secret of their success: "We never say die until the balls are rotting," he says. "And have you ever seen balls rotting?"

Flintoff the centurion is bright spark

CRICKET

BY MARK HARGREAVES in Johannesburg

England A 447-9 dec
Gauteng 130-3

ENGLAND A built on Andrew Flintoff's polished century by taking three early wickets to give them a healthy advantage at the halfway stage of their four-day tour match against Gauteng in Johannesburg yesterday.

The Lancashire all-rounder made a career-best 145 to push his side towards a declaration at 447 for 9.

Graeme Swann, Dean Cosker and Darren Thomas then claimed a wicket apiece as Gauteng closed the second day at the Wanderers Stadium still 168 runs short of avoiding the follow-on.

There was an early disappointment for the tourists in the second over of the morning when Worcestershire's Vikram Solanki went to pull a short ball from the left-arm pace bowler Ross Veenstra only to drag the ball on to his stumps having made 24.

Swann included a quartet of well-timed fours in his brief innings of 18 before reaching wide outside off stump to touch a ball from Veenstra to first slip.

Chris Read then joined Flintoff in a seventh-wicket partnership which added 91 in 19 overs.

Flintoff reached his hundred off 140 balls in 222 minutes, including 14 fours and a six, and boosted the scoring rate sufficiently to enable the England A captain Michael Vaughan to declare in mid-afternoon.

Read was out for 38 but Flintoff then really cut loose and surged past his previous highest first-class score of 124 made against Northamptonshire last June.

At this stage Gauteng were forced to deploy a field with no fewer than eight men patrolling the boundary.

Flintoff was finally caught on the deep midwicket boundary off Zander de Bruyn having lofted the bowler for a straight six the previous ball. He had been in for 276 minutes, faced 176 balls and hit 18 fours and two sixes.

There was still time for Thomas to stroke three fours before Paul Franks was out, after which Vaughan called a halt to set Gauteng a follow-on target of 298.

The pitch looked flat when the Gauteng batsmen began their reply until the introduction of the England spinners changed the complexion of the innings.

Swann tempted the opener Adam Bacher to sweep but the out-of-favour Test player went so far across his stumps that he was bowled behind his body for 13.

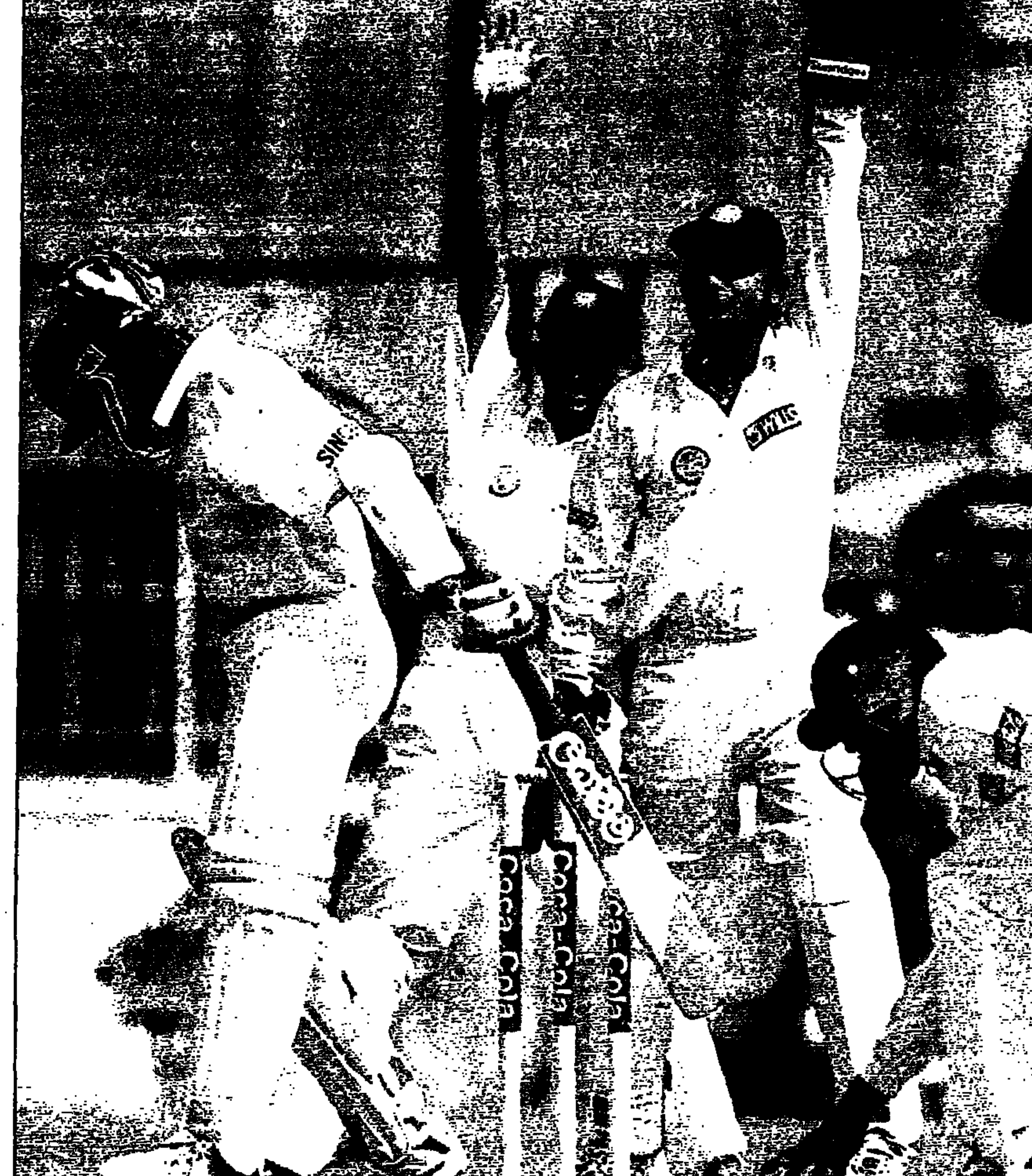
Two more wickets then fell with the score on 91, with Sven Koenig trapped leg-before by Cosker one short of his 50 before Andre Seymore went back to Thomas next over only to see the ball drop down and roll on to his stumps.

It was left to Derek Crookes and De Bruyn to play out time against Swann and Cosker, both of whom were getting appreciable turn.

Second day of three: England A won toss

ENGLAND A – First innings
(Overnight: 263 for 4)
A Flintoff c Crookes b de Bruyn .145
V S Solanki b Veenstra 24
G P Swann c Crookes b Veenstra ..18
†C M W Read lbw b de Bruyn 38
P J Franks c Bacher b de Bruyn 8
S D Thomas not out 14
Extras (b2, lb1, w2, nb17)......22
Total (for 9 dec, 129.2 overs) 447
Fall (cont): 5-272, 6-310, 7-401, 8-431, 9-447.
Did not bat: D A Cosker.
Bowling: Veenstra 25-7-57-2; Kidwell 21-1-83-1; De Bruyn 22.2-6-81-3; Masimula 13-4-43-0; Crookes 24-4-84-0; Bodi 22-2-87-3; Bacher 1-0-4-0; Koenig 1-0-5-0.

GAUTENG – First innings
S G Koenig lbw b Cosker 49
*A M Bacher b Swann 13
A J Seymore b Thomas 21
D N Crookes not out 19
Z de Bruyn not out 17
Extras (b3, lb3, nb5) 11
Total (for 3, 49 overs)......130
Fall: 1-31, 2-91, 3-91.
To bat: G Toyana, †N Pothas, R E Veenstra, G Bodi, E W Kidwell, W B Masimula.
Bowling: Thomas 11-2-23-1; Franks 10-2-26-0; Swann 12-3-37-1; Cosker 11-4-23-1; Flintoff 5-1-15-0.
Umpires: B Lambson and C School.



Sri Lanka's Mabela Jayawardene survives an appeal for lbw in the Asian Test Championship yesterday AFP

Dropped catches are costly for India

India 518-7 dec
Sri Lanka 293-4

AN UNBEATEN century by Mahela Jayawardene frustrated India's attempt to take charge of the Asian Test Championship match against Sri Lanka in Colombo yesterday.

When bad light forced an early close to the third day the Sri Lankans were 293 for 4 in reply to India's first innings of 518 for 7 declared. Resuming at 121 for 2, they lost Chandika Hathurusingha and Aravinda de Silva during the morning session but made the Indian bowlers work hard for the rest of the day.

Jayawardene, who was on 59 overnight, made India pay for missed catches to complete his second Test century. He was unbeaten on 128 at the close having been dropped three times before he reached his hundred with a six off the off-spinner Harbajan Singh. His century came off 209 balls and included one six and 17 fours. He shared a fifth-wicket stand of 115 with his captain, Arjuna Ranatunga, who was 66 not out at the close.

Third day: Sri Lanka won toss
INDIA – First Innings 518 for 7 dec (S Ramesh 143, R S Dravid 107).

SRI LANKA – First innings
(Overnight: 121 for 2)
M S Atapattu lbw b Nehra 6
R R Arnold run out 34
D P M Jayawardene not out 128
U C Hathurusingha lbw b Prasad 14
P A De Silva b H Singh 23
*A Ranatunga not out 66
Extras (b1 lb9 w4 nb8) 22
Total (for 4, 95.2 overs) 293
Fall (cont): 3-129, 4-178.
To bat: H P Tillakaratne, †R S Kaluwitharana, W P U J C Vass, K E A Upushantha, R L Perera.
Bowling (to date): Venkatesh Prasad 21-6-67-1 (1nb, 4w); Nehra 19.2-2-64-1 (7nb); Kumble 31-7-69-0, Harbajan Singh 22-6-77-1; Tendulkar 2-0-6-0.
Umpires: R E Koertzen (SA); R B Tiffin (Zim).

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

My golf has been a bit like my singing – a mixture of karaoke and rap. It's called crap.
Nick Faldo, before losing to Tiger Woods in the World Match Play Championship.

We're very disappointed. The dressing room is like a morgue.
Clive Woodward, England rugby union coach, admitting that England's Calcutta Cup victory against Scotland was not up to scatch.

There is no ideal candidate for the England job. He has not been born. He does not exist.
Derek Fazackerley, on joining Kevin Keegan's England managerial team.

Inter are close to a nervous breakdown.
Internazionale spokesman on the club's state of health.

My right ear is 14 times its normal size and I have got a hoofprint on my arm, but apart from that I'm fine.
Lorcan Wyer, jockey, after falling at Newcastle.

I was going at quite a high speed. The giraffe just crossed in front of me.
Carlos Sainz, of Spain, on the problems facing drivers in the Safari Rally in Kenya.

WEEKEND FIXTURE GUIDE AND POOLS CHECK

TODAY

FOOTBALL

3.0 unless stated

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP
1 Aston Villa v Coventry
2 Charlton v Nottingham Forest
3 Chelsea v Liverpool
4 Everton v Wimbledon
5 Manchester Utd v Southampton
6 Sheffield Wed v Middlesbrough
7 Tottenham v Derby
8 West Ham v Blackburn

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE FIRST DIVISION
9 Bolton v Crewe
10 Bradford City v West Bromwich
11 Bristol City v Ipswich
12 Grimsby v Birmingham
13 Norwich v Sheffield Utd
14 Portsmouth v Port Vale
15 Stockport v QPR
16 Tranmere v Bury
17 Wolves v Huddersfield
– Oxford Utd v Sunderland (6.0)

SECOND DIVISION
18 Bournemouth v Wycombe
19 Burnley v Gillingham
20 Chesterfield v Manchester City
21 Colchester v Reading
22 Lincoln City v Bristol Rovers
23 Luton v Blackpool
24 Macclesfield v Wigan
25 Northampton v Millwall
26 Notts County v Walsall
27 Preston v Oldham
28 Stoke v Wrexham
29 York v Fulham

THIRD DIVISION
30 Barnet v Exeter
31 Brentford v Scarborough
32 Brighton v Leyton Orient
33 Cambridge Utd v Southend
34 Chester v Carlisle
35 Halifax v Hull
36 Hartlepool v Rotherham
37 Mansfield v Scunthorpe
38 Plymouth v Peterborough
39 Rochdale v Cardiff
– Shrewsbury v Darlington
– Swansea v Torquay

SCOTTISH PREMIER LEAGUE
40 Celtic v Dundee Utd
41 Dundee v St Johnstone
42 Hearts v Aberdeen
43 Motherwell v Dunfermline

FIRST DIVISION
44 Ayr v Hibernian
45 Clydebank v Morton
46 Raith v Airdrie
47 St Mirren v Hamilton
48 Stranraer v Falkirk

SECOND DIVISION
49 Forfar v Partick
– East Fife v Alloa
– Inverness CT v Livingston
– Queen of the South v Arbroath
– Stirling v Clyde

THIRD DIVISION
– Albion v Ross County
– East Stirling v Brechin
– Montrose v Berwick
– Queen's Park v Dumbarton
– Stenhousemuir v Cowdenbeath

NATIONWIDE CONFERENCE
– Doncaster v Hereford
– Dover v Hayes
– Farnborough v Kidderminster
– Hednesford v Leek
– Kettering v Welling
– Telford v Barrow

FA UMBRO TROPHY Fifth round: Boston Utd v Altrincham; Cheltenham v Hendon; Dagenham & Redbridge v St Albans; Emley v Whitby Town; Hitchin v Forest Green Rovers; Kingstonian v Yeovil; Northwich Victoria v Colwyn Bay; Woking v Southport.

RYMAN LEAGUE Premier Division: Aldershot Town v Carshalton; Aylesbury v Bishop's Stortford; Basingstoke v Hampton; Boreham Wood v Billericay Town; Gravesend & Northfleet v Walton & Hersham; Harrow Borough v Slough; Purfleet v Bromley; Sutton Utd v Dulwich Hamlet. **First Division:** Barton Rovers v Leatherhead; Berkhamsted Town v Yeading; Braintree Town v Wembley; Canvey Island v Croydon; Leyton Pennant v Staines Town; Maidenhead Utd v Bognor Regis Town; Molesey v Romford; Oxford City v Grays Athletic; Uxbridge v Whyteleafe; Worthing v Chertsey Town. **Second Division:** Abingdon Town v Harlow Town; Banstead Athletic v Hertford Town; Barking v Thame Utd; Chalfont St Peter v Bedford Town; Hemel Hempstead v Wokingham Town; Horsham v Marlow; Leighton Town v Wivenhoe Town; Met Police v Witham Town; Northwood v Bracknell Town; Tooting & Mitcham v Edgware Town; Windsor & Eton v Hungerford Town. **Third Division:** Camberley Town v East Thurrock Utd; Clapton v Cheshunt; Corinthian Casuals v Flackwell Heath; Ford Utd v Epsom & Ewell; Hornchurch v Tring Town; Kingsbury Town v Croydon Athletic; Lewes v Egham Town; Southall v Dorking; Tilbury v Aveley; Wingate & Finchley v Ware.

UNIBOND LEAGUE Premier Division: Accrington Stanley v Spennymoor; Bamber Bridge v Winsford Utd; Bishop Auckland v Lancaster; Chorley v Gateshead; Frickley v Marine; Hyde Utd v Guiseley; Leigh RMI v Blyth Spartans; Stalybridge Celtic v Gainsborough Trinity; Worksop v Runcorn. **First Division:** Alfreton Town v Flixton; Ashton Utd v Whitley Bay; Burscough v Bradford Park Avenue; Eastwood Town v Radcliffe Borough; Farsley Celtic v Congleton Town; Gretna v Droylsden; Harrogate Town v Hucknall Town; Matlock Town v Great Harwood Town; Netherfield Kendal v Witton Albion; Trafford v Stocksbridge.

DR MARTENS LEAGUE Premier Division: Bromsgrove Rovers v Salisbury; Dorchester v Cambridge City; Gloucester City v King's Lynn; Grantham v Rothwell Town; Gresley Rovers v Atherstone; Ilkeston Town v Crawley Town; Merthyr Tydfil v Nuneaton Borough; Tamworth v Hastings; Weymouth v Burton Albion; Worcester City v Halesowen Town. **Midland Division:** Bedworth Utd v Solihull Boro; Bilston Town v Bloxwich Town; Cinderford Town v Shepshed Dynamo; Evesham Utd v Hinckley Utd; Moor Green v VS Rugby; Paget Rangers v Clevedon Town; Racing Warwick v Newport (Gwent); Redditch Utd v Stamford AFC; Weston-super-Mare v Sutton Coldfield Town; Wisbech Town v Stourbridge. **Southern Division:** Andover v Baldock Town; Chelmsford City v Newport (IoW); Cirencester Town v Fleet Town; Erith & Belvedere v Corby Town; Fisher Athletic London v Ashford Town; Folkestone Invicta v Yate Town; Margate v Brackley Town; Raunds Town v Dartford; Sittingbourne v Havant & Waterlooville; Witney Town v St Leonards.

NORTH WESTERN TRAINS LEAGUE First Division: Glossop North End v Skelmersdale Utd; Holker Old Boys v Atherton LR; Kidsgrove Athletic v Workington; Leek CSOB v Mossley; Maine Road v Atherton Collieries; Nantwich Town v Clitheroe; Ramsbottom Utd v Bootle; Rossendale Utd v Cheadle Town. **League Cup semi-finals:** Prescot Cables v Newcastle Town; St Helens Town v Vauxhall GM.

WINSTONLEAD KENT LEAGUE Premier Division: Beckenham Town v Crockenhill; Canterbury City v Greenwich Borough; Cray Wanderers v Lordswood; Erith Town v Deal Town; Faversham Town v Tunbridge Wells; Hythe Utd v Herne Bay; Slade Green v Sheppey Utd; Thamesmead Town v Chatham Town; Whitstable Town v Ramsgate.

UHLSPORT UNITED COUNTIES LEAGUE Premier Division: Bourne v Buckingham Town; Cogenhoe v Potton; Desborough v Kempston; Eynesbury v Boston Town; Ford Sports v Yaxley; Holbeach v St Neots; Northampton Spencer v Mirrlees Blackstone; Stewarts & Lloyds Corby v Long Buckby; Stotfold v Spalding; Wootton v Wellingborough.

UNIJET SUSSEX COUNTY LEAGUE First Division: Burgess Hill Town v Selsey; Chichester City v Broadbridge Heath; Eastbourne Town v Portfield; Pagham v Hailsham Town; Redhill v Whitehawk; Saltdean Utd v Ringmer; Shoreham v Horsham YMCA. **John O'Hara League Cup fourth round:** Wick v Eastbourne Utd.

SCREWFIX DIRECT LEAGUE Premier Division: Bideford v Bristol Manor Farm; Bridport v Bishop Sutton; Calne Town v Bridgwater Town; Keynsham Town v Backwell Utd; Melksham Town v Elmore; Tiverton Town v Taunton Town; Westbury Utd v Mangotsfield Utd.

NORTHERN COUNTIES EAST LEAGUE Premier Division: Armthorpe Welfare v Liversedge; Arnold Town v Eccleshill Utd; Denaby United v Hallam; Garforth Town v Brigg Town; Glasshoughton Welfare v Staveley MW; North Ferriby United v Maltby; Ossett Albion v Selby Town; Pontefract v Pickering Town; Sheffield v Buxton; Thackley v Ossett Town.

INTERLINK EXPRESS MIDLAND ALLIANCE: Barwell v Stratford Town; Bridgnorth Town v West Midlands Police; Chasetown v Willenhall Town; Halesowen Harriers v Stapenhill; Kings Norton Town v Pelsall Villa, Oldbury Utd v Boldmere St Michaels; Pershore Town v Rocester; Shifnal Town v Rushall Olympic; Stourport Swifts v Sandwell Borough; Wednesfield v Knypersley Victoria.

JEWSON WESSEX LEAGUE: Totton v Whitchurch Utd; BAT v Thatcham Town; Bournemouth v Portsmouth RN; Christchurch v Lymington & New Milton; Cowes Sports v Bemerton Heath; East Cowes Vics v Downton; Eastleigh v Wimborne Town; Fareham Town v Moneyfields; Gosport Borough v Afc Newbury; Hamble v Brockenhurst.

JEWSON EASTERN LEAGUE Premier Division: Bury Town v Lowestoft Town; Fakenham Town v Harwich & Parkeston; Felixstowe Port & Town v Ely City; Halstead Town v Diss Town; Maldon Town v Gorleston; Sudbury Town v Newmarket Town; Sudbury Wanderers v Ipswich Wanderers; Warboys v Wroxham; Warton Utd v Histon; Woodbridge Town v Great Yarmouth Town.

ARNOTT INSURANCE NORTHERN LEAGUE First Division: Billingham Synthonia v Consett; Chester Le Street v Guisborough Town; Crook Town v Seaham Red Star; Easington v Billingham Town; Jarrow Roofing v Dunston Federation; Shildon v Newcastle Blue Star; South Shields v Bedlington Terriers; Tow Law Town v Morpeth Town; West Auckland v Marske Utd.

PRESS & JOURNAL HIGHLAND LEAGUE: Deveronvale v Huntly; Forres Mechanics v Brora Rangers; Fort William v Peterhead; Fraserburgh v Lossiemouth; Nairn County v Clachnacuddin; Rothes v Elgin City; Wick Academy v Keith.

SMIRNOFF IRISH LEAGUE Premier Division: Coleraine v Cliftonville; Glenavon v Ballymena; Linfield v Portadown; Newry v Glentoran; Omagh Town v Crusaders. **First Division:** Bangor v Dungannon Swifts; Distillery v Ballyclare; Larne v Ards; Limavady Utd v Carrick.

LEAGUE OF WALES (2.30): Afan Lido v Caersws; Cwmbran v Connah's Quay Nomads; Haverfordwest v Conwy; Inter Cable-Tel Cardiff v Caernarfon Town; Newtown v Barry Town; Rhayader Town v Aberystwyth; TNS Llansantffraid v Carmarthen Town.

RUGBY LEAGUE

SILK CUT CHALLENGE CUP FIFTH ROUND
Leeds v St Helens (3.0)

RUGBY UNION

2.30 unless stated

EUROPEAN SHIELD FINAL
Bourgoin v Montferrand (3.30) (at Lyons)

TETLEY'S BITTER CUP QUARTER-FINALS
Gloucester v Harlequins (3.0)
Richmond v Leicester

ALLIED DUNBAR PREMIERSHIP ONE
Bedford v Sale (3.0)

PREMIERSHIP TWO
Exeter v Worcester (3.0)
Fylde v Moseley
London Welsh v Coventry
Orrell v Bristol (3.0)
Rugby v Wakefield (3.0)

JEWSON NATIONAL LEAGUE One: Birmingham/Solihull v Reading; Harrogate v Lydney; Liverpool St Helens v Orley; Manchester v Henley (2.15); Nottingham v Camberley (3.0); Rosslyn Park v Newbury; Wharfedale v Morley (2.15). **Two North:** Aspatria v Walsall; Kendal v Preston Grasshoppers; Lichfield v Hinckley; Sedgley Park v New Brighton; Sheffield v Nuneaton; Whitchurch v Sandal; Winnington Park v Stourbridge. **Two South:** Bracknell v Esher (2.15); Cheltenham v Barking; Norwich v Met Police; Plymouth v North Walsham; Redruth v Bridgwater (3.0); Tabard v Havant (2.15); Weston-super-Mare v Clifton (3.0).

SWALEC CUP Sixth round: Aberavon v Cardiff; Blackwood v Tredegar; Bridgend v Swansea (5.30); Cross Keys v Tondu; Llanelli v Llanhilleth; Pontypool v Neath; Pontypridd v Bonymaen.

WELSH NATIONAL LEAGUE First Division: Llandovery v Newbridge.

TENNENT'S VELVET PREMIERSHIP First Division: Boroughmuir v West of Scotland (3.0); Glasgow Hawks v Watsonians (3.0); Hawick v Heriots FP (3.0); Jed-Forest v Currie (3.0); Stirling County v Melrose (3.0). **Second Division:** Aberdeen GSFP v Kelso (3.0); Biggar v Musselburgh (3.0); Dundee HSFP v Kilmarnock (3.0); Edinburgh Acads v Selkirk (3.0); Gala v Kirkcaldy (3.0). **Third Division:** Ayr v Stewarts Mel FP (3.0); Glasgow Southern v Gordonians (3.0); Glenrothes v Berwick (3.0); Grangemouth v East Kilbride (3.0); Preston Lodge v Peebles (3.0).

AIB LEAGUE First Division: Ballymena v Garryowen; Blackrock College v Buccaneers; Clontarf v Shannon; Cork Constitution v St Marys; Terenure v Galwegians; Young Munster v Lansdowne. **Second Division:** Bective Rangers v Dolphin; DLSP v Malone; Derry v Greystones; Dungannon v Old Belvedere; Portadown v Old Crescent; Skerries v Wanderers; Sunday's Well v Old Wesley; UCC v Ballynahinch.

CLUB MATCHES: Northampton v Scottish Districts (3.0).

HOCKEY

EHL PREMIER: Bournville v Southgate (2.30); Canterbury v Hounslow (2.0); Guildford v East Grinstead (12.30); Old Loughtonians v Brooklands (2.30); Reading v Cannock (2.0); Teddington v Beeston (2.0). Chelmsford v Eastcote (2.15); Doncaster v Hull (12.0); Hampstead & Westminster v Harleston Magpies (2.0); Lewes v Oxford Univ (1.30); Loughborough Students v Sheffield (2.0); Oxford Hawks v Bromley (2.0) (*at St Edwards School*); St Albans v Indian Gymkhana (1.0); Surbiton v Barford Tigers (12.30).

SOUTH PREMIER: Anchorians v Old Whitgiftians; Beckenham v Wimbledon; Bournemouth v Old Cranleighans; City of Portsmouth v Blackheath; Fareham v Chichester; Gore Court v Woking; Herne Bay v Wokingham; Maidenhead v Purley; Richmond v High Wycombe; Winchester v Tunbridge Wells.

DTZ MIDLAND PREMIER: Edgbaston v North Notts; Hampton-in-Arden v Leek; Harborne v North Stafford; Khalsa v Northampton Saints; Olton & West Warwick v Nottingham; Shrewsbury v Coventry & North Warwick.

PREMIER HOLIDAYS EAST PREMIER: Bedford Town v Cambridge Univ; Bishop's Stortford v Cambridge City; Colchester v Blueharts; Crostyx v Clacton; Peterborough Town v West Herts.

NORTH PREMIER: Bowdon v Durham Univ; Chester v Southport; Norton v Formby; Rotherham v Ben Rhydding; Sheffield Bankers v Harrogate; Warrington v Neston.

WEST OF ENGLAND & SOUTH WALES PREMIER: Bath Buccaneers v Taunton Vale; Cheltenham v Swansea; Robinsons v West Wilts; Whitchurch v Gloucester City; Yeovil & Sherborne v Weston-super-Mare.

WOMEN'S EUROPEAN INDOOR CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP (9.0-5.15) (*at Kelvin Hall, Glasgow*)

WOMEN'S EHL PREMIER: Ipswich v Doncaster (12.0); Fyffes Leicester v Sutton Coldfield (12.30); Olton Terraquest v Hightown (11.0) (*at King Edward VI School*). **First Division:** Aldridge v Loughborough Students (2.0); Bradford v Sunderland Ashbrooke (12.0); Canterbury v Chelmsford Highway (12.0); Trojans v Wimbledon (1.30). **Second Division:** Bracknell v Hampton-in-Arden (2.0) (*at Easthampstead Park*); Ealing v Woking (1.30); Old Loughtonians v Sherwood (12.30); Poynton v St Albans (12.15).

WOMEN'S MIDLAND PREMIER: Bedford v Olton Terraquest; Belper v Loughborough Students; Crimson Ramblers v North Staffs; Kettering v Luton.

WOMEN'S NORTH First Division: Deeside Ramblers v Sheffield; Don Valley v Chester; Leyland Motors v Blackburn; Winnington Park v Liverpool.

WOMEN'S EAST PREMIER: Bluehearts v Sevenoaks; Dereham v Cambridge City; Harleston Magpies v Ipswich; Letchworth v Bury St Edmunds.

WOMEN'S SOUTH First Division: City of Portsmouth v Dulwich; Hendon v Rover Cowley; Horsham v Maidenhead; Reading v West Witney; Tulse Hill v Southampton.

WOMEN'S WEST PREMIER: Cheltenham v Portishead Firebrands; Exeter v Taunton Vale; Leominster v Colwall; Redland v Exmouth; St Austell v Bournemouth.

WOMEN'S TRYSPORTS THREE COUNTIES First Division: Henley v Farnham Common; Milton Keynes v Phoenix-Ranelagh; Newbury v City of Oxford; Rover Cowley v Wycombe Rye; Sonning v Oxford Hawks; Windsor v Bracknell; Wokingham v Reading.

WOMEN'S MIDLAND BANK WELSH LEAGUE: Colwyn Bay v Newtown; Penarth v UWIC; Swansea v Cwmtawe; Cardiff Athletic v Newport.

BASKETBALL

DAIRYLEA DUNKERS 1999 ALL STAR GAME (*at Telewest Arena, Newcastle*)

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFIER
Israel v England (8.50) (*at Tel Aviv*)

ICE HOCKEY

SEKONDA SUPERLEAGUE: Nottingham Panthers v Ayr Scottish Eagles (7.0); Sheffield Steelers v Newcastle Riverkings (7.0); Bracknell Bees v Cardiff Devils (6.0).

OTHER SPORTS

BOXING: World Boxing Union lightweight title: C Dunne (Liverpool, holder) v P Holliday (SA) (*at York Hall, Bethnal Green*). **Commonwealth middleweight title:** P Jones (Sheffield) v J Matthews (London) (*at Oldham*).

TENNIS: Guardian Direct Cup (*at Battersea Park, London*).

TOMORROW

FOOTBALL

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP
Newcastle v Arsenal (4.0)

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE FIRST DIVISION
Crystal Palace v Barnsley (1.0)

SCOTTISH PREMIER LEAGUE
Kilmarnock v Rangers (6.05)

FAI HARP LAGER National League Premier Division: Derry City v Bray Wanderers (3.15); UCD v Sligo Rovers (3.15).

RUGBY LEAGUE

SILK CUT CHALLENGE CUP FIFTH ROUND
Huddersfield v Salford (3.0)
Hull K R v London (3.0)
Wakefield v Bradford (3.0)
Warrington v Halifax (2.30)
Whitehaven v Oldham (3.0)
Widnes v Leigh (3.15)

NORTHERN FORD Premiership: Rochdale v Doncaster (12.0).

RUGBY UNION

2.30 unless stated

TETLEY'S BITTER CUP QUARTER-FINALS
Newcastle v Saracens (2.0)
Wasps v London Irish (3.0)

ALLIED DUNBAR Premiership Two: Blackheath v Rotherham (3.0); Leeds v Waterloo.

SWALEC CUP Sixth round: Caerphilly v Ebbw Vale.

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONALS: England v Scotland (*at Richmond Athletic Ground*); England A v Scotland A (12.0) (*at Richmond Athletic Ground*).

HOCKEY

EHA CUP Sixth round: Cannock v Lewes (2.0); Old Loughtonians v Teddington (2.0); Reading v Canterbury (2.0), Southgate v Hounslow (2.0).

EHL First Division: Bromley v Hull (1.0); Havant v Stourport (2.0); Isca v Firebrands (2.0).

SOUTH PREMIER: Richmond v Beckenham.

WOMEN'S EUROPEAN INDOOR CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP (9.0-5.0) (*at Kelvin Hall, Glasgow*)

BRITISH AEROSPACE UNDER-18 WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP Finals (9.30-5.30) (*at Milton Keynes Stadium*).

BASKETBALL

BUDWEISER LEAGUE: Chester Jets v Newcastle Eagles (7.30).

ICE HOCKEY

SEKONDA SUPERLEAGUE: Newcastle Riverkings v Ayr Scottish Eagles (6.30); Cardiff Devils v Manchester Storm (6.0); Bracknell Bees v Nottingham Panthers (6.0); London Knights v Sheffield Steelers (6.0).

OTHER SPORTS

TENNIS: Guardian Direct Cup (*at Battersea Park, London*)

THIS WEEK'S TRANSFERS

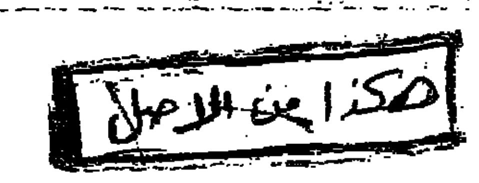
FULL TRANSFERS

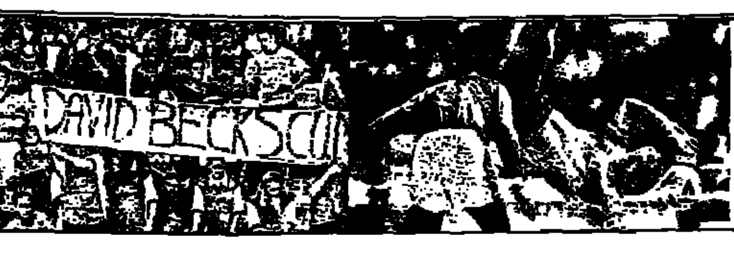
Free transfers or undisclosed fees unless stated

Craig Armstrong (defender) Nottm Forest to Huddersfield (£750,000); **Dani Rodrigues** (forward) Farense (It) to Southampton (£170,000); **Steve Howard** (forward) Hartlepool to Northampton (£120,000); **Paul Evans** (midfielder) Shrewsbury to Brentford (£110,000); **Steven Boyack** (midfielder) Rangers to Dundee (£25,000); **David Hillier** (midfielder) Portsmouth to Bristol Rovers (£15,000); **Neil Howarth** (defender) Macclesfield to Cheltenham (£7,000); **Gavin Ward** (goalkeeper) Bolton Wanderers to Stoke City

LOANS/TRIALS

Bradley Allen (forward) Charlton Athletic to Colchester; **Kevin Nicholls** (midfielder) Charlton Athletic to Brighton; **Andy Gray** (midfielder) Nottingham Forest to Preston; **Paul Shepherd** (defender) Leeds Utd to Tranmere; **Tommy Wright** (goalkeeper) Manchester City to Wrexham; **Hector-Luis Gordano** (defender) Rosario Central (Arg) to Nottingham Forest (trial); **Rodrigo Gralls** (midfielder) Adetico Juventus (Br) to Middlesbrough (trial); **Steve Barbe** (midfielder) RWD Molenbeek (Bel) to Wimbledon (trial), **Anthony Fenton** (defender) Manchester City to Portsmouth (trial); **Neil Heaney** (forward) Manchester City to Bristol City (trial), **Matthew Wicks** (defender) Crewe to Peterborough (trial).





THE SWEEPER

BY CLIVE WHITE AND NICK HARRIS



Never an easy ride for Konjic

NO DOUBT Bill Shankly would have had the good sense not to tell Coventry's new Bosnian international, Muhamed Konjic, that football is more important than life and death. Yet, had it not been for football, some of Konjic's own family and countrymen might never have survived their war-torn country.

After what Konjic has been through, a relegation struggle with the Sky Blues – which would become that much more likely with defeat in the derby at Villa Park today – would be just a minor hiccup in his career.

The big central defender may have joined Coventry for £2m from Monaco but a transfer earlier in his career, from FC Sarajevo to NK Zagreb, was paid in food parcels. Indeed his salary while in Croatia continued to be paid in the same kind, with the food sent home to Bosnia. Konjic explained: "A kilo of coffee was £500 and it was £200 for a few loaves of bread. Money was useless. We needed food."

And if his transfer from Monte Carlo to Highfield Road may have appeared anything but smooth because of hold-ups with the DoE it was plain sailing compared to the tortuous journey he made from Bosnia to Croatia. The trip had to be undertaken by car and because of road-blocks the driver chose mountain roads and trails. All went well during the two days it took until he fell asleep at the wheel, hit a bus and plunged 60ft down a ravine.

"I broke the bones in both my arms on the dashboard but I had to play in a match two weeks later because my family needed food," Konjic said. "I was crying every time I made a tackle or jumped for a header. The other players must have wondered what was wrong with me because I didn't tell them about my injuries."

Konjic's career in England has not had the best of starts. He did well in his debut, against Tottenham Hotspur, but in his second game, against Newcastle United, he was given another rough ride, this time by Alan Shearer, and was dropped for last week's match against Manchester United. But if Coventry were looking for an heroic figure to succeed Dion Dublin – whom they will face today for the first time since his departure – they could not have done better than choose Konjic. Not for nothing has he inherited the former favourite's No 9 shirt.

IT MUST have been with some inevitability that natives of Sheffield accepted the Blades' defeat in the FA Cup rematch with Arsenal in midweek. The Steel City has been coming off the worse in meetings with the Gunners for some time now. In 1993, Wednesday lost two Wembley finals against them and earlier this season the Owls were ultimately losers again in a league game against the same opposition when the dismissal of Paolo Di Canio led to their striker leaving the club.

Now Arsenal's victory over United has left Wednesday, who were due to visit Highbury on 6 March, kicking their heels on quarter-finals day.

SONG SHEET

Sunderland fans' devotion to the pants of a star

"Niall Quinn's disco pants are the best,
They go up from his arse to his chest,
They are better than Adam and the Ants',
Niall Quinn's disco pants."

Tune: Here we go.

PERHAPS SHEFFIELD intends to get its own back by moving the game's headquarters away from the capital. As the Sweeper revealed recently, many of the Football Association's most influential people – Geoff Thompson, David Davies, Howard Wilkinson and Dave Richards – are all Sheffield men, as are two of the FA's recently appointed coaches, Nigel Pearson and Nigel Spackman.

In fact, the Sheffield "Mafia" had intended that the unveiling of their new part-time, temporary England coach, Kevin Keegan, would be at Hillsborough, but it had to be called off because the deal had not been finalised. So the announcement instead was made the following day in London. The reason given for the Sheffield location was that it was halfway between Keegan's home in the north-east and his job at Fulham – never mind that he probably normally flies from one to the other.

JUDGING BY Everton's disappointing follow-up last weekend to their five-goal mauling of Middlesbrough, it is by no means guaranteed that they will now have the dishonour of finishing the season with fewer goals at home than any team ever in the top flight. With just three goals at Goodison all season they were strongly fancied, prior to the Middlesbrough goal rush, to overhaul Woolwich Arsenal's record of 11 home goals in the 1912-13 season. They still need four from the six remaining home games to avoid a share of the record but the discovery of Francis Jeffers has given them renewed hope of doing so.

It might be a bit much though, to expect the youngster to score all four himself and thereby equal the output of another Everton player in that 1912-13 season, whose name, would you believe it, was Frank Jefferis.

FILMING IN Sheffield is all the rage since The Full Monty, but it did not go down too well recently with one land owner when the city's two Brazilian footballers, Emerson Thome, of Wednesday, and Marcelo, of United, demonstrated their skills on his property without permission. The couple were just going through their repertoire, for the benefit of BSkyB's cameras, when the land owner set his dogs on them. The Cocacabana was never like this. "There was no arguing with him," said the pair's agent. "I've never seen them move so fast. If you think they're quick on a Saturday, you should have seen them then."

Well, as they say, when you play the Brazilians you have to dog them all over the field.

AS YOU WERE



IN THE weekend before Manchester United embark on their latest attempt to secure European glory, a mere glance at the 1968 European Cup-winning side reminds us what an upstanding, talented bunch of young men the club had on its books back then. Just look at Sir Bobby Charlton (plain Bobby then, of course) sitting to the right of Sir Matt Busby. Can you imagine him dating a Spice Girl, wearing a sarong on his holidays and dyeing his hair blond, as young David Beckham does? Okay, okay, so Bobby never had any hair, but you get the point. Can you imagine Brian Kidd (right of Sir Bobby) advertising Brylcreem and driving round in a flashy motor? And can you imagine George Best (behind, Sir Bobby) ever having a fit of petulance or acting in any way that might not be becoming for an icon?

THE PRICE IS RIGHT

THE SWEEPER gets his sarnies from Ready To Eat and loves Red Cafe. No euro sceptic he. We're off into Europe this week so let's dive in for a European portfolio. Manchester United could not have wished for a better time to meet out-of-form, injury-plagued Internazionale while Ukranian giants Dynamo Kiev can oust beleaguered holders Real Madrid. They're the ante-post advice for the European Cup, while the Uefa Cup surely rests between Italian big boys Parma and French league leaders Marseilles. There's only one possible winner of the Cup Winner's Cup and it's not Chelsea. Lazio, the best club on the planet, are tub-thumping certainties. Meanwhile, this week-end, let's put Sheffield Wednesday to bury Boro in trebles with three likely draws, while Fiorentina may be held to a draw on C4 by Salernitana.

LE SWEEPER'S TRES BON EURO-FILES

LIBERO WAGERS (Four £2 trebles with Ladbrokes): Everton to **draw** with Wimbledon (9-4); **Sheff Wed** to beat Middlesbrough (4-6); Newcastle to **draw** with Arsenal (9-4); Leicester to **draw** with Leeds (9-4).

SUNDAY C4 ITALIAN JOB
Salernitana v Fiorentina
Draw (£2, 2-1, generally).

UEFA CUP PORTFOLIO
Marseilles (£2, 7-1, generally); **Parma** (£3, 100-30, Coral).

EUROPEAN CUP PORTFOLIO
Dynamo Kiev (£2, 8-1, generally); **Man Utd** (£2, 9-2, Coral & William Hill).

CUP WINNERS' CUP PORTFOLIO
Lazio (£4, 6-4, Tote).

ORIGINAL BANK: £100.

CURRENT KITTY: £163.95!

TODAY'S BETS: £25.07 (inc. tax).

MASCOT ON THE MAT

Name: Rockin' Robin.
Club: Wrexham.
Appearance: A big, red-breasted bird with a yellow face and brown boots.
Crime sheet: A trouble-maker from the moment he was hatched, this rampant robin has left damage and destruction wherever he's gone. The Welsh wildman (if that's not tautological) has set off a fire extinguisher before a game, ridden onto the pitch on a bike and tried to run over a linesman (for which he was sent off by the club's managing director) and dug huge divots from the ground with a pitchfork. Among his other acts of skulduggery are poking fun at the linesmen – he waves his own flag when the ball goes out of play – and running onto the pitch waving a pole (another early bath offence). It is to be hoped that marriage to his girlfriend Tina Turfit (Simply the Red Breast) will tame this rascal.
In mitigation, Your Honour: Since the announcement of his marriage, Rockin' has promised to become a reformed bird.
Other information: He may seem a nasty piece of work, but Rockin' Robin is just a big-hearted, big-breasted tweetie-pie who wants to be loved by an ageing rock star.

MY TEAM



JOHN MCCRIRICK
NEWCASTLE UNITED

Channel 4 racing's betting ring guru

"I was born in Surrey, but there weren't many good teams there. I've supported Newcastle all my miserable life because my uncle was from there. It was half a crown to watch in the 50s. The average wage was £10 a week. It was a great era: Simpson, Harvey, Crowe. I once interviewed Jackie Milburn, a total hero, the epitome of his age. I can't believe Newcastle will win the title in my lifetime. I'm ashamed of my support. I'm a fair weather fan. I haven't got a rattle, but I've visited the Newcastle shop and I've got some hats. I think Shearer's lost half a yard of pace. He's still the best striker in the country, but needs support. Ruud Gullitt is terrific! He did it for Chelsea and I believe he'll do it for us." *Interview by Daniel Booth*

IN T'NET

Found on the Web: Blind, Stupid and Desperate
THIS UNOFFICIAL Watford website is chock-a-block with amusing football trivia, including the superbly detailed "If I had the wings of a sparrow" page which gives the traditional song a multi-national flavour by reproducing it in a host of languages including Japanese, Spanish, Italian, Finnish, Norwegian and West Riding. Other pages on the site include "The Hall of Arse", which is an amusing look at what contributors think about the ineptitude of players who once graced the Vicarage Road turf, and "Famous defeats", which recounts, amongst other things, how The Hornets lost 3-1 to Kaiserslauten in the Uefa Cup first round, first leg in 1983.
http://www.display.co.uk/watford/main.html

SEEN BUT NOT BOUGHT

THE CHANCES are that Oxford will get pasted this evening by Sunderland in the first ever pay-per-view football match on national television. For those Oxford fans who'd like to make themselves look tougher so that they won't be taunted by the north-easterners, what better thing to do than spend £39.99 on an OUFC black towelling bath robe (with white belt)? This delightful, must-have item will turn even the weediest fan into a fearsome Bruce Lee.

THEY'RE NOT ALL DENNIS BERGKAMP

Unsung foreign legionnaires No 28
IVO DEN BIEMAN:
The 32-year old Dutch utility player started his career in his home country with an amateur side, SV Leones. Seeking a taste of the high life, he moved to Montrose in 1990, to Dundee in 1992 and on to Dunfermline in 1993, where he remained until last October, when he moved to Falkirk. Ivo is not only flexible (ranging from solid defender to probing midfielder) but is also a keen scuba diver who's been known to hang out at Eric Clapton concerts. He's talented, musical and cerebral too – with a marketing and business degree that might come in handy when he finishes playing. After 15 games with Falkirk, Ivo has s established a reputation as a man who can "whip good crosses into the box." He has yet to score for his latest club, but rather unfortunately he did score *against* them last week, netting an own (winning) goal in the 2-1 defeat to Hibernian.

Hapless victim of terrace taunters

FAN'S EYE VIEW
NOTTINGHAM FOREST
BY STEPHEN SHAW

WHEN FOOTBALL fans are young boys they regard their favourites with an almost supernatural awe. On Saturday afternoons these spiritual beings assume a temporal form before ascending again to their Olympian homes. As the fan becomes an adult he acquires a job, a wife and children, as well as assuming grown-up responsibilities. Yet his regard for footballers remains exactly the same. My wife never ceases to marvel at the air of expectation that greeted the news that Martin O'Neill had entered the building before speaking at our local league's anniversary dinner.

There is a reverse side to this. Adding spice to every crowd is the moaner. He seems to revel in his team's misfortunes. And there is always one player he can't stand.

My friends and I soon discovered our anti-hero. His name was Eddie Baily. In his prime, he had played for Spurs and England and, after a short stay at Port Vale, he had been bought by Nottingham Forest.

To the wider football world, Baily was known as "The Cheeky Chappie." To us, he was "Grandpa". Those con artists of the press tried to convince us that Baily was 30-ish. With his balding head, an incipient paunch and an apparent inability to raise anything more than a steady jog, he had to be at least 60. We loathed Eddie Baily. Every time another Forester passed to him, one of us would snap: "He's given it to Grandpa!"

At the other extreme of our passion, our hero was the 5ft 5in fleet-footed flyer from Lossiemouth, Stewart Imlach. The sight of him racing down the touchline, picking up the ball without breaking stride and surging past opponents with that blistering pace, was the most exhilarating sight in football. It was this ability which propelled Imlach into the Scotland team. Imagine our shock, then, when reading an article "written" by our hero, in discovering that Imlach credited Eddie Baily with his sudden success.

When we grew too tall to remain in our favoured spot in the front row by the tunnel, we relocated to the Bridgford End. Here, we met the real McCoy: a genuine, full-grown, mega-moaner. On account of his swarthy, weather-beaten complexion, his ankle-length oilskins and sailor's cap, we nicknamed him "The Captain".

The Captain grumbled at everything but the particular victim of his bile was the young striker, Geoff Vowden. What Vowden had done to upset him we knew not, but the young Channel Islander had only to touch the ball to elicit a melody of prehistoric utterances.

Once in work I invested in a season ticket in the Main Stand. Any idea I might have that my seat would free me from the moaners was soon destroyed. Once, I overheard a conversation as to whether or not John McGovern, who had recently lifted the European Cup for the second time, was good enough for Eastwood Town, but my award for the all-time-daft-comment has to go to: "Well, of course, I never did rate John Robertson!"

The truth is that the moaner's chief inspiration is ignorance. For my part, I may have grumbled about him 40 years ago, but how I wish I could watch a Grandpa Baily trotting out with the present Forest team.

Killie in revival mode

SCOTTISH FOOTBALL

BY JOHN NISBET

A DRY spell in front of goal has left Kilmarnock thirsting for the success that put the provincial side among the Scottish Premier League contenders before the winter break. A revival of their scoring prowess tomorrow, when they face Rangers, will certainly make them the toast of east Glasgow as well as help to sate their longing for a Uefa Cup qualifying place.

Just one goal from three league games since returning from the hiatus has seen Kilmarnock's ambition of winning their first title since 1965 fade away. Bobby Williamson's side went into the shutdown four points behind Rangers, but have taken only one point from three games since and now lie in third place, 15 points adrift with a game in hand.

"The shutdown hit our momentum," admitted the striker Paul Wright, Kilmarnock's top scorer this season with six goals, despite missing large chunks of the season through injury. "Injuries have played a part. I have had a groin problem, while Jérome Vareille broke his arm in December and he was a vital player for us.

"The title may be beyond us now, but we want to claw back three points," he said Wright, who has scored against Rangers on their last two visits to Rugby Park. "Our aim is reaching the Uefa Cup at the very least."

Rangers, despite recent injuries which have put defender Arthur Numan out for the season and Colin Hendry for the next month, look near-certainties to clinch their 48th title if they overcome Kilmarnock.

The coach, Dick Advocaat, is unperturbed by second-placed Celtic's surge of form since returning form the break at the end of January. "There is no reason for nerves," he said. "There is still a gap of 10 points between us and Celtic. The most important thing is that we keep on winning. The pressure is on the other side."

The "other side" include Marko Viduka for the first time today when the champions face Dundee United at Parkhead. The Australian striker has scored twice in successive games for Celtic's Under-21 side and is close to full fitness again after his protracted £3m transfer from Croatia Zagreb.

Premiership: Faced with his greatest football challenge, Ron Atkinson turned to old favourite John Harkes

Forest look to their cyberman

BY PHIL SHAW

ONE WEEK John Harkes was soaking up the sun in Hawaii. The next he was feeling the heat of a relegation struggle in an East Midlands winter. Just another twist in a story which, as well as providing rich material for the first autobiography by an American soccer player, may well be football's first cyberspace odyssey.

Harkes was on the Pacific island last month, taking a vacation after leading Washington DC United to an historic triumph over the Brazilians of Vasco da Gama in the Inter-American Cup, when he received an intriguing e-mail from a friend. It informed him that his former manager at Sheffield Wednesday, Ron Atkinson, was setting up his Red Adair operation at Nottingham Forest, and suggested light-heartedly that the 31-year-old midfielder might follow suit.

Forty-eight hours after returning to Washington, Harkes learned that Forest actually did want him on loan. It was Friday and Big Ron needed him there by Monday. One hastily arranged flight later, he was the most-capped player in the Premiership. By the end of the next week, having not kicked a ball competitively for nearly two months, he was "thrown in at the deep end" as emergency right-back at Everton.

Forest duly gained their first win in 20 games, only for three ensuing defeats, including an 8-1 mauling by Manchester United, to leave them adrift at the bottom of the Premiership. Relegation looks a formality unless today's visit to a resurgent Charlton Athletic delivers the first in a string of victories, but experience has taught Harkes to expect the unexpected.

It could hardly be otherwise for the son of Scottish migrants to New Jersey, after he grew up observing Pele at close quarters as a ball-boy for the New York Cosmos. From the University of Virginia he graduated to the school of hard knocks that is the English game. Then, after becoming the first American to play (and score) in a major Wembley final with Wednesday, he served Derby and West Ham before going home to the new Major League Soccer.

As a veteran of 90 internationals, and arguably the most accomplished player the United States has ever produced, Harkes had reason to look forward to his third World Cup finals last summer. Yet in the spring, the coach, Steve Sampson, suddenly and controversially cut him from the squad.

"It was a disgrace the way he did it," Harkes recalled. "We sat down and he said: 'I'm not sure about taking you'. I said: 'Where did this come from? I just captained your side in Belgium'. His final decision came out via the media. He didn't handle it like a man."

> *The Bosman ruling means the clubs have no power. My team-mates will say: 'Hold on a minute, Harksey, you're full of crap'*

Sampson alleged indiscipline off the pitch and positional inflexibility on it. "He tried to make up any story he could," Harkes said, "but the real reason was his insecurity as a coach. He changed six players before the finals, which is why we did so miserably. He destroyed the chemistry that got us to France.

"I took no satisfaction from the fact that we lost all three matches. I watched at home, in pain. Putting it in perspective, I know worse things happen to people, but the way the media questioned me and my character was annoying. It was a power trip for Steve Sampson. He focused all the hype on me."

Harkes' website received 500 hits a day as the arguments raged, almost all backing him. The episode also provided the ironic title of his forthcoming book, *Captain For Life and Other Temporary Assignments*, the first part being an epithet which Sampson lavished on him in 1996.

His latest assignment could yet become more permanent if he finishes the season strongly, or Forest defy gravity. Either way, he will be back in MLS this summer, with a new team, New England Revolution, under a new coach, the former Italy goalkeeper Walter Zenga.

The Boston franchise have taken over his contract from DC United, whom Harkes led to the first two MLS titles and defeat by Chicago Fire in the third final. "The league's doing well," he said. "Crowds average around 19,000 and the investors have committed themselves to a further five years.

"At DC the atmosphere was like a party at every game. And the technique of the players is good. They just aren't steeped in a soccer culture like kids here, where they develop through the system of schools, youth and reserve teams. Soccer's now the biggest participation sport. We have to start academies like the Premiership clubs and work on the 10-year-olds."

MLS is still waiting for its first indigenous star, its Michael Jordan. Eddie Pope, a Sol Campbell clone from North Carolina, has a World Cup behind him at 25, but Harkes fears he missed a chance to learn how to read the game better by opting for the "comfort zone" of DC United rather than Ajax or one of two English clubs who coveted him.

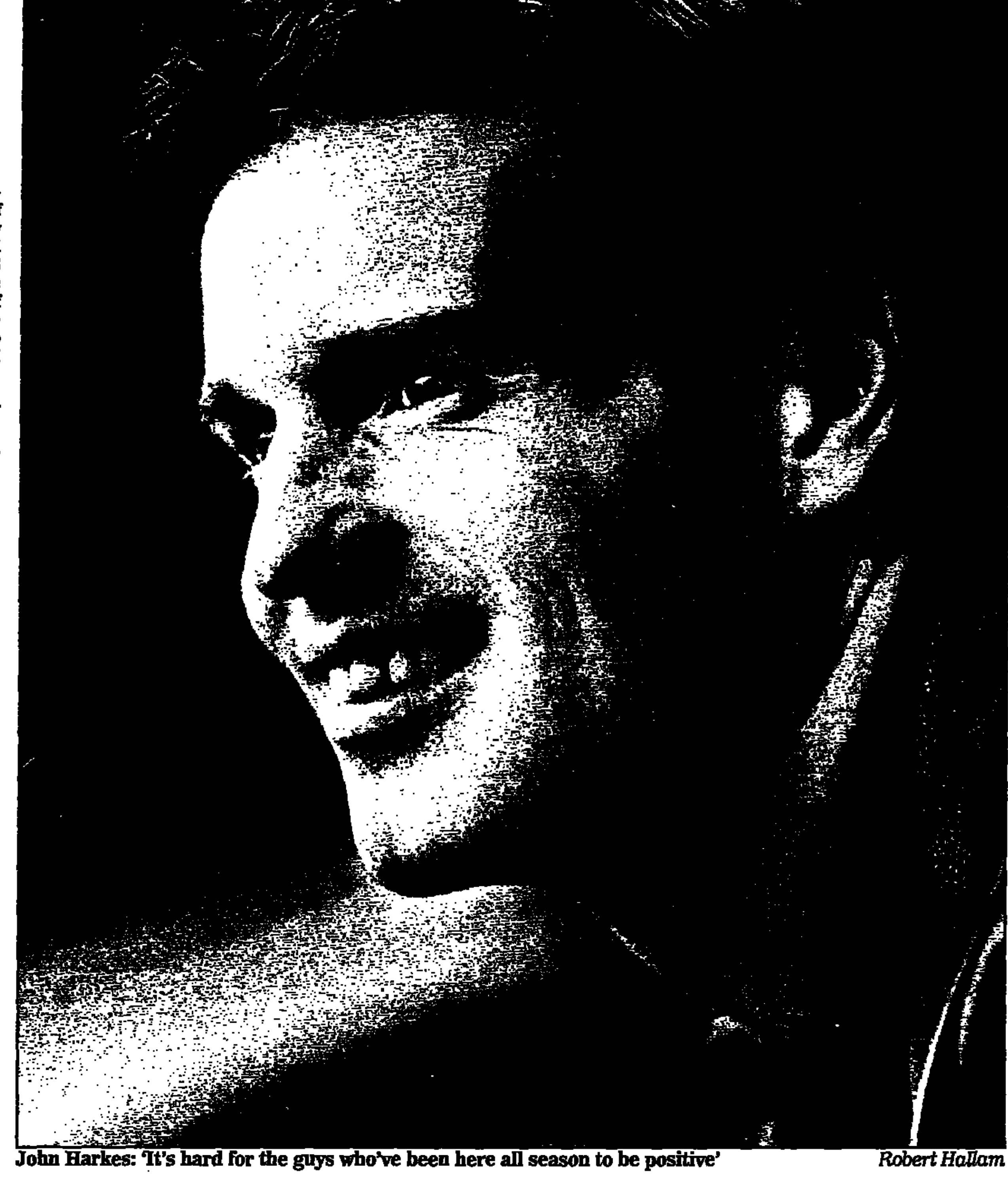
Harkes, with Alexi Lalas and Carlos Valderrama, remains the best-known face of MLS and co-hosts a weekly soccer show on television. "I can go to cities around the US and be recognised on the street. That's partly a result of *USA 94*, but also because the league gets exposure on two major networks, ESPN and ABC. It's like any product: you need to spend the money, invest in it early on, even if you're going to have losses. In time you're going to gain that money back."

Warming to his theme, Harkes talked about buying Forest and restoring past glories. While his tongue was firmly in his cheek, his assessment of how English football has changed since he first arrived nine years ago reveals surprisingly traditional views. Not that he is against the influx of foreigners, which he believes has led to more teams trusting in skill and possession rather than speed and power.

The downside? "The money in the game is ruining it. The high payments to players mean there's no loyalty to clubs any more. The Bosman ruling means the clubs have no power. My team-mates will say: 'Hold on a minute, Harksey, you're full of crap', but I'm not blaming them. If someone's getting £30,000 a week and the club increase it to £40,000, they're not going to say 'no'. It just means it's hard to get stability within a team like we had at Wednesday."

Forest's plight demanded fresh impetus rather than stability; hence the arrival of Harkes, Carlton Palmer and Atkinson. "Ron's still bubbly and lively, still enjoying his five-a-sides. But he has come into a situation where his back's against the wall. It would be difficult for any manager.

"It's hard for the guys who've been here all season to be positive. They've got used to struggling. After Everton the feeling was: 'We can do this!' The pity was having to play United the next week, with all their quality. We couldn't build on the win. We felt embarrassed by the way we ducked our heads that day, but anything's possible, even now."



John Harkes: 'It's hard for the guys who've been here all season to be positive' *Robert Hallam*

Today's six-pointer may see Harkes in direct opposition to the division's second most-capped man, John Barnes, who was flying at Liverpool and on the way to 79 appearances for England when he last faced him. "I had tea with John once. I was in awe of him. He's a nice man as well as a top-class player. You don't lose that quality on the ball."

Reassuringly for Harkes, such wisdom is shared by Sampson's successor, Bruce Arena. They worked together at Virginia and DC United, so he may yet be recalled to the national set-up. Should the US coach want to get in touch, he is on-line most nights, answering messages that vary from requests for tips about improving skills to marriage proposals.

"I enjoy it because it's a way for the fans to get in touch with the players," said Harkes, highlighting a chasm in attitudes between the American and the British footballer. Maybe some time on the Net would help Forest hit the net in the critical weeks ahead. It is said, after all, that the e-mail of the species is more deadly.

Oxford show pleasure at being put in the spotlight

NATIONWIDE PREVIEW

BY ROB PARRISH

THE FIRST DIVISION is the stage for football's latest televisual innovation when Oxford United entertain the leaders, Sunderland, at the Manor Ground tonight.

To cater for Sky Sports's pay-per-view audience, the match will kick off at 6.0pm. The Oxford manager, Malcolm Shotton, predicts that the experiment will, inevitably, become a regular feature around the country – and could help smaller clubs like his own.

"I think it will come into the game widely," Shotton said. "From Sunderland's point of view it's a great move. We have only been able to give them around 2,000 tickets and they have been getting over 40,000 fans for their home games, so it's a way for them to see the match.

"It might not happen at the bigger clubs, who can fit 30,000 people in and give the away fans a lot of tickets, but it is certainly an option when you have a small ground like ours."

The Bolton manager, Colin Todd, after a run of 15 games unbeaten which has seen his side climb into second place, is confident his players will not suffer from over-confidence when the bottom club Crewe visit the Reebok Stadium this afternoon.

"People will look at the match and say that it will be a formality for us, but I am sure there will not be any complacency from my players," Todd said. "We will have to be mentally tuned in and we cannot afford to take Crewe lightly. All we can do is concentrate on applying ourselves to the situation in hand and hopefully we will be able to get a result on the day to keep us in the promotion chase."

His Crewe counterpart, Dario Gradi, insists that the trip could act as a great incentive to his struggling side. "I remember when we used to go to much less salubrious places, and I would much rather be going to the Reebok Stadium," he said.

Bradford City's promotion challenge has stuttered, with just one win in the last five games, but their manager Paul Jewell views the statistics differently ahead of today's game against West Bromwich at Valley Parade. "We haven't been beaten in three games is the way I look at it," he said. "People outside of the club try and talk negative, but there are no thoughts of any disaster here."

George Burley is under no illusions about Ipswich's trip to struggling Bristol City. The Town manager reckons the Robins are a better side than their second-bottom league position suggests.

"They are playing better than their results are showing at the moment," Burley said. "They conceded a goal five minutes into injury time against West Bromwich last week and the week before they conceded a penalty in the closing minutes against Sunderland. They are fighting for their lives to avoid relegation and we know that it is going to be a very tough game."

The Birmingham City manager, Trevor Francis, admits he is not relishing his side's trip to fellow play-off hopefuls Grimsby, but he is pleased that the shortest month is now coming to an end. "Many people felt they would fade away but they haven't and they could go the distance this season," he said. "On paper we always knew that February was going to be a tough month. We took a point against Palace, lost to Stockport and then got another point against Bolton and now we have another tough away game."

The veteran goalkeeper Alan Knight returns to the Portsmouth side in the relegation battle against Port Vale at Fratton Park, after Aaron Flahavan was ruled out of the rest of the season with shoulder and facial injuries.

League cautious over replays

THE FOOTBALL League has revealed it would have given much lengthier consideration to the prospect of replaying a controversial fixture such as Arsenal's FA Cup tie against Sheffield United than the Football Association did.

It may still have come up with the same decision to sanction a rematch if the game had been a Worthington Cup tie, but there would be little prospect of the same move applying to Nationwide League games.

The controversy at Highbury earlier this month was caused when Arsenal failed to return possession to United and instead scored through Marc Overmars, after the visitors had kicked the ball out to allow their player, Lee Morris, to receive treatment.

The FA's interim executive director, David Davies, consulted with a legal expert, Nic Coward, and Challenge Cup committee members before accepting Arsenal's offer, given within 90 minutes of the final whistle, to replay the tie.

The Football League chief executive, Richard Scudamore, did not directly join in with criticism which has previously been expressed in some quarters that the FA acted hastily. However, he has said: "The FA were within their rights to do what they did because it was their competition.

"But I would like to think that, if it had been a one-legged Worthington Cup tie, we would have sat down and taken 24 hours before coming up with the decision that was right in the circumstances."

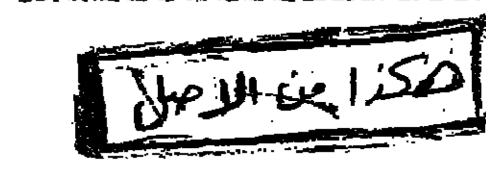
Scudamore added: "I can't really ever see a situation where we would replay a League game when no rules had actually been broken." He explained that no other clubs are affected by the result of a cup tie, but League games inevitably have an effect on other teams, not just in terms of points but also goals scored by both sides.

Scudamore also revealed that the Football League had "put as much pressure as possible" on the FA to switch the kick-off of England's Euro 2000 qualifier against Poland on 27 March from 3pm. It was concerned its clubs would lose out financially from matches clashing with an international screened live, and all but a dozen Nationwide League fixtures have now been switched from the Saturday afternoon.

"We understand and accept the reasons, but that doesn't mean we don't find it any more palatable," Scudamore said. The reasons for not moving the timing of the game were that Glenn Hoddle, the former England coach, believed his players' preparations in terms of rest and diet would be disrupted by an earlier kick-off, while police objected to a later start.

Meanwhile, Scudamore revealed that next season's Worthington Cup final, as well as the play-off finals, would probably be moved to the new Welsh national stadium in Cardiff if reconstruction work rules out Wembley.

This season's Worthington Cup final will be refereed by a Nationwide League official: Terry Heilbron, from County Durham.



Premiership: Manchester United's Caribbean craftsman is proving that even his huge fee was money well spent

The revelation of Dwight Yorke

By Adam Szreter

WHEN ALEX Ferguson agreed to pay Aston Villa £12.6m for the services of Dwight Yorke at the start of this season, the Manchester United manager's judgement was called into question not for the first time in his career. Probably not for the last time, Ferguson has proved his critics completely wrong.

For several seasons Yorke was regarded as a fine player – unorthodox, clever and with a *good record as a goalscorer.* But £12.6m? Villa fans who have since expressed their resentment at his departure were probably quietly confident it represented good business for them at the time; United fans were wondering if Fergie was *becoming desperate. But surely* not even Ferguson could have forecast the impact Yorke has had at Old Trafford. He is the leading scorer in the Premiership, was the leading scorer in their Champions' League campaign and, furthermore, his partnership with the one-time misfit Andy Cole – founded on Yorke's footballing brain, Cole's lightning reflexes and a close personal friendship – has provided United with not just one new player but two and kick-started Cole's stuttering *international career.*

'Sometimes the occasion will hit you full in the face when you walk out for a match'

Yorke has been a revelation, the permanently upturned collar by no means the only line of comparison to be drawn with the seemingly incomparable Eric Cantona. Like Cantona, Yorke took unhesitatingly to *the biggest stage in English* club football and, like Cantona, he can usually be relied upon to play the right ball at the right time. In fact, just about the only *blot on his copybook so far* was a missed penalty against Arsenal 10 days ago, but even King Eric missed one of those.



Dwight on Dwight: 'There were actually far more talented people than myself in Trinidad and Tobago, but I had a bit more desire' *Allsport*

Unlike Cantona, Yorke smiles a lot but he seems to share the same icy coolness that set the Frenchman apart. "I'm not a nervous type of guy," he explained recently at the end of a long afternoon of promotional work at a luxury hotel in the Cheshire stockbroker belt where Yorke, a happy bachelor, has just moved in to a new home. He will have the Fergusons and the Beckhams as near neighbours.

"*Sometimes the occasion* will hit you full in the face when you walk out for a match, but I won't be shaking in my boots. It's a game of football and that's why we're here. I can switch off easily. I don't know what stress or pressure is, I don't understand these things. I suppose coming from the Caribbean and having a laid-*back attitude makes me more* relaxed, not worrying about the size of my price tag or anything like that."

Yorke was born into a family of nine children, all brought up in a two-bedroom bungalow in Tobago. "We were very poor – not a lot to look forward to," he said. "Things weren't coming easy at all, I certainly wanted that to change and football was very much what I wanted. There were actually far more talented people than myself in Trinidad and Tobago, but I had a bit more desire.

"Seeing people straying by *the wayside made me want to* be someone. There were so few opportunities back home that I might have ended up just hanging out, taking in the way of life, getting involved in drugs or whatever. But I chose not to because I wanted to be somebody else."

The rest of his family still live on the island – one brother *plays cricket for Trinidad and* Tobago and the others are all keen sportsmen – but even though Yorke is now wealthy beyond the imagination of most of his fellow countrymen he has no intention of turning his back on them, despite the fact that his nationality means he will probably never play international football at the very highest level.

"When people talk about foreign players here my name is never mentioned," he said. "Maybe it's because I came here when I was 17 with nothing, and no one knew who I was, *just this guy from Trinidad and* Tobago. The other foreign players here have usually got some kind of pedigree. But I'm very proud of where I come from.

"It's only now that I really appreciate my country. After living here for 10 years, when I go back I sit there looking at the sunset and glitter on the beach and think: 'Wow, I had this for 17 *years but I've never seen it* the way I'm seeing it now'. It is a beautiful place. There's no traffic, the weather is very good all year round, the crime rate is not as high as some of the other Caribbean countries and the people are very friendly and warm."

Whether they are quite as friendly and warm towards Yorke, rather than envious when he returns this summer for the first time since his lucrative transfer to United, remains to be seen. "It probably will be difficult because my family gets it all the time," he said. "*People there are not really aware of how football operates here* – some of them will look at the £12.6m, which is the equivalent of 126 million Trinidad dollars, and think that money is mine.

"The ones who are more into sport would know, but despite that people will certainly look at me as a wealthy *young man coming back to* the Caribbean, especially being at the biggest club now and doing the things I've done for United. It will put me on a certain level. But that won't hamper me. It's where I was brought up and where I'll always go back to. They're my roots. I've got some great friends there and I'm still very proud and happy to be in their company when I go back. It *might be a different ball game* this summer but that's the last thing on my mind at the moment."

What is on his mind is Man*chester United. As a player,* Yorke has undoubtedly progressed since moving there and he is happy to acknowledge Ferguson's role in that. "He just wanted me to be myself. He told me: 'You know who you're playing for, you're happy, enjoy yourself. If you can't play here you can't play anywhere else'. I think I'm always improving *and if I didn't I'd probably pack* the game in, but I'm coming to the pinnacle of my career now. My strengths are probably linking the play and running at defenders but my finishing is still not as good as I'd like it to be. I'm not as instinctive as someone *like Alan Shearer.*"

As for his part in Cole's revival, Yorke said: "When you meet someone you get to know certain things. Andy had a lot of *injuries and having to deal* with everything wasn't easy for him. People gave him stick, but if you look at his goalscoring record there aren't many better. *He's shown a lot of character* to overcome all that and prove people wrong every day."

Away from football, Yorke admits to having few friends outside the game but is "a keen golfer – when the weather's good and it's not affecting my game. Apart from that, winter for me is putting on the fire and sitting there watching sport on telly. *I also like a good afternoon* sleep but since I've been at United I haven't had much sleep because there's always something happening."

For Yorke and the rest of the United side, there's certainly something happening at Old Trafford over the next few days. First, the visit of Southampton this afternoon and the quest for another three points in their bid to regain the Premiership title; then, on Wednesday night, the biggest game in Yorke's life: the European Cup quarter-final first leg against Internazionale. How will he approach it?

"*In Europe it's all mind work* and tactics, people looking at the game differently and there's a key to getting success," he said. "The players don't change, but the mentality changes because there's a certain amount of respect for the other team. You alter your style of play slightly, because what you might be able to get *away with in the Premiership,* at this level you can't afford to make as many mistakes."

Yorke added: "You can't describe to people the type of feeling I'll get walking out there on March 3rd – Inter Milan, Ronaldo, Baggio, whatever. These are things of boyhood dreams.

"Growing up in – I wouldn't say a ghetto, but in a very low environment – to think one day I'd be here, rubbing shoulders with the likes of these guys. Man, if you can't enjoy those moments and make it a night to remember, knowing you're coming off that pitch having *given it everything,* then you shouldn't be there." And even though Ronaldo, after all, will probably not be there, you get the impression nothing is going to wipe the broad smile off Yorke's face for a while.

Villa hope to turn back clock

By Guy Hodgson

AS JOHN GREGORY reflected on the first anniversary of his *appointment as Aston Villa* manager this week, a tantalising prospect opened. If his players can only repeat what they did last season, then a championship could be theirs.

Gregory arrived as Mr Who? on 25 February 1998 but his *identity was forged by a run-in* that yielded 27 from a possible 33 points. Twelve months on, a *similar ratio from the last 12* games would have Villa there or thereabouts at the top of the Premiership in May. At the very least, it would earn them *qualification for the Champions'* League.

On the basis of what you have done before you can do again, the prospect is not daunting and, on paper, the task looks easier. Gregory was confronted by a demoralised squad that had lost successive games and were in 15th place when he arrived from Wycombe with his resuscitation kit. Fifteen points better off this time around from one game fewer, the patient is positively sprightly in comparison.

And yet, paradoxically, he is facing possibly the most difficult time at Villa Park as confidence ebbs away. Young players, such as Gareth Barry and Lee Hendrie, have looked jaded, more experienced bodies have either been off form or injured, while Stan Collymore is depressed. One point from four games has detached them from the leading pack and not lightened the mood.

Today they meet Coventry, who arguably contributed as much as anyone to Brian Little's *departure and Gregory's* arrival last February by winning their first ever game at Villa Park. They are troubled by relegation worries, Villa are just troubled, and a West Midlands derby that is never noted for its genteel air ought to be just a little robust this afternoon.

"We've got to get our season on track," Gareth Southgate, *the Villa captain, said.* "Things could go either way now so it's a vitally important game. We've had long discussions round the dinner table at the training ground and we have a fair idea of what has to be done to put things right. But the most basic thing is that we have to start *keeping clean sheets again.* That was our strength at the start of the season and that's why we were top of the table. It's no coincidence since we have not been as solid that we've been slipping."

Gregory adopted a back four against Wimbledon on Sunday to allow Barry a much-needed break and may forgo the sweeper system again. The versatile Dion Dublin is an option in defence, although he will be anxious to play up front, his groin injury willing, against the *team who sold him to Villa for* £5.75m in November.

"Last Sunday was a start in stopping the rot," Southgate *said, "and we're only a few* points away from a Champions' League spot. No side is pulling away massively. There is a determination not to let the season just slip away."

On the subject of rot elimination, Charlton could rival *Rentokil at the moment,* as three successive wins have promoted them out of the relegation places for the first time in 10 weeks. Today they meet the Premiership's whipping boys, Nottingham Forest, at The Valley and for the first *time in a long while they will* begin a game as favourites.

Charlton's success has coincided with a more circumspect *attitude, as their midfield play*er Keith Jones explained. "In the Premier League the first goal is all important," he said. "You can't afford to give it away early. We're learning to keep things tight, to spoil things a bit and hit teams on the break.

"*Wins are so hard to come by* at this level, so if you get three on the trot it makes a substantial difference. That's why the Forest match is so important to both clubs. They are running out of games, so for them it will be all or nothing."

Everton, Blackburn and Southampton are also being confronted by do-or-die situations and, of the three, the Merseysiders appear to have the easiest task today: a home game against Wimbledon. Even that has provisos, as the visitors have lost only one of their six Premiership visits to Goodison.

Brian Kidd, who rivalled King Midas with one defeat in his first 13 games as Blackburn manager, is back to base metal after successive defeats and an injury list that amounts to £30m in unused talent. A point today at West Ham is the least he requires.

Southampton, meanwhile, will hope that a good home record against Manchester United can be transported to Old Trafford. Precedent does not encourage them, however, as they have won only once in their last 25 League visits there. Still, with Matt Le Tissier fit again and with home minds *bound to be wandering to Wed*nesday's European Cup quarter-final against Internazionale, anything is possible.

PREMIERSHIP TABLE

				Home					Away					5-game form	
	Pl	Pts	GD	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Recent on right	Upcoming matches
1 Man Utd	27	54	+33	9	4	1	33	14	6	5	2	26	14	WWWDW	[illegible]
2 Chelsea	26	50	+18	8	5	0	19	7	5	6	2	20	14	WLWDW	[illegible]
3 Arsenal	26	49	+22	8	5	0	21	4	5	5	3	13	8	WWWDW	[illegible]
4 Aston Villa	26	44	+10	8	2	3	24	17	4	6	3	13	10	WLLLD	[illegible]
5 Leeds	26	42	+14	8	3	2	21	6	3	6	4	18	19	WLLWW	[illegible]
6 Liverpool	26	39	+17	7	4	2	33	16	4	2	7	16	16	WLWLD	[illegible]
7 Derby	26	37	+1	5	5	3	13	12	4	5	4	12	12	WWLWL	[illegible]
8 West Ham	26	37	-9	7	3	3	18	19	3	4	6	11	19	LDLWD	[illegible]
9 Wimbledon	25	36	-6	7	5	1	18	11	2	4	6	11	24	WDDLD	[illegible]
10 Newcastle	25	34	-1	7	2	4	20	16	2	5	6	14	19	DWWWL	[illegible]
11 Middlesbro	26	33	-3	4	8	1	16	10	3	4	6	17	26	LDLLD	[illegible]
12 Sheff Wed	25	32	+7	5	3	4	13	7	4	2	7	18	17	DWLWW	[illegible]
13 Tottenham	25	32	-2	5	5	2	19	16	2	6	5	10	15	DDDDD	[illegible]
14 Leicester	25	30	-9	5	3	4	17	18	2	6	5	8	16	DLDLL	[illegible]
15 Everton	26	27	-9	3	7	3	8	6	3	2	8	11	22	LLLWL	[illegible]
16 Charlton	26	26	-6	4	4	5	18	13	2	4	7	13	24	DLWWW	[illegible]
17 Blackburn	26	26	-9	5	3	5	15	16	1	5	7	12	20	LDWDL	[illegible]
18 Coventry	26	24	-13	5	4	4	17	14	1	2	10	7	23	LWDLL	[illegible]
19 Southampton	25	23	-23	5	2	6	20	22	1	3	8	5	26	WLWLW	[illegible]
20 Nottm Forest	26	16	-32	1	6	6	11	24	2	1	10	11	30	LWLLL	[illegible]

Goldberg offers to pay Palace wage bill

By Alan Nixon

MARK GOLDBERG says he will pay Crystal Palace players' wages out of his own pocket following a financial crisis at Selhurst Park.

The Palace chairman Goldberg has stepped in after players *were told a cash flow* problem at the First Division club meant they would not be paid this weekend. Wages were due to go through today.

"Mr Goldberg has guaranteed that the wages of both players and staff will be paid in full *by Wednesday,*" *a spokesman* said. "They will be paid with his own personal money."

Efforts to sell some of the club's bigger earners have failed because their salaries are so high that other clubs cannot afford them. The Australian centre-half Craig Moore is on a package of £663,000 a year, a figure that has frightened off both Birmingham City and Leeds United. Goldberg hoped to sell Moore at a profit after buying him for *£700,000 from Rangers,* but now may have to cut his losses.

Palace have also been trying to sell Lee Bradbury, again to Birmingham, for around £1m. He is on a more modest salary of around £6,000 a week, but a swap deal involving Nicky *Forster was called off yesterday.*

Rumours of Palace's plight have been rife for weeks. Their caretaker-manager, Steve Coppell, warned the players there *would be no money for wages* and Goldberg told him to raise £2.5m by the transfer deadline.

Paulo Wanchope's agent Dennis Roach has criticised Jim Smith after the Derby manager voiced his concern at the player's failure to sign a new contract. *Smith fears the striker* might wait for his present deal to expire at the end of next season and then cash in on a move under the Bosman ruling. Talks between Smith, the Costa Rican and Roach have been going on for nine months.

"To be *honest, I don't know* the reason why he hasn't signed," Smith said. "It would make him one of the best-paid players at the club. I wonder whether he's being given the wrong advice about his future by those who are close to him."

Barnsley have signed Clayton Blackmore from Middlesbrough, on a free transfer, until the end of the season.

Fiorentina missing 'Batigol'

ITALIAN FOOTBALL

By Ian Davies

FIORENTINA, RECENTLY displaced by Lazio at the top of *Serie A* and still missing Gabriel Batistuta, their brilliant Argentine striker, face a tricky trip to Salerno to meet struggling Salernitana in tomorrow's live game on Channel 4.

Fiorentina took *Serie A* by storm in the first half of the season, with Batistuta hammering in an amazing 18 league goals and Edmundo, the temperament but talented Brazilian, *plus the Portuguese* playmaker Rui Costa providing tremendous service around him.

However, "*Batigol*" sustained a knee injury in Fiorentina's goalless draw against Milan in Florence recently and, without him, his side looked impotent up front when held 0-0 by Roma in Florence last week.

Serie A new boys Salernitana, meanwhile, despite the presence of the useful striker Marco Di Vaio, look destined for a swift return *to Serie B. They lie 17th* of 18 (Empoli are bottom) in *Serie A* following last week's 2-1 home defeat against Parma.

Meanwhile, Internazionale, *hard-to-beat* at home (eight wins, two defeats this term in the league) but woeful away (two wins, four draws and six defeats) entertain Juventus *tonight,* ahead of Wednesday's European Cup quarter-final with Manchester United. Inter will gain still be without Ronaldo. "*Il Fenomeno*" sat out last week's defeat at Lazio despite being passed fit and seems unlikely to figure at Old Trafford.

This afternoon: Roma v Milan; Piacenza v Bologna; **Tonight:** Internazionale v Juventus; Parma v Perugia. **Tomorrow afternoon:** Bari v Cagliari; Empoli v Sampdoria; Salernitana v Fiorentina; Venezia v Udinese; Vicenza v Lazio.

Weekend guide to the Premiership

MATCH OF THE DAY



Chelsea v Liverpool

Last season: 4-1



IT WILL be a relieved Gianluca Vialli at Stamford Bridge today for the visit of Liverpool, as the player-coach can at last choose from the plethora of striking options he has become so richly accustomed to in West London.

Vialli's Norwegian pine was cured last week with the sight of Tore Andre Flo returning to the fray, albeit as a substitute, in the 3-1 win at Nottingham Forest. Flo has been troubled by an ankle injury incurred in the FA Cup third-round tie at Oldham Athletic back on 2 January, but showed at the City Ground that he is close to full fitness

With Italian compatriot Gianfranco Zola in fine form, Vialli may summon Flo to start at the expense of his Finnish *wunderkind*

BY BRUCE POPE

Mikael Forssell, while Vialli always has the option of giving himself a run-out.

The defence, with the France pairing of Franck Leboeuf (left) and Marcel Desailly providing a formidable central pairing, is further bolstered by the return of Graeme Le Saux and Michael Duberry to fitness.

Even more importantly, though, could be the availability of Roberto Di Matteo in the absence of the suspended Dennis Wise. While a Wise versus Paul Ince midfield battle would undoubtedly have set the fur flying, Di Matteo's role at least means that Chelsea have a better than even chance of finishing with the full complement of 11 players on the pitch.

Ince, banned for the 2-2 draw with West Ham last weekend, will be champing at the bit to get back in the action. Unfortunately for the Liverpool manager, Gérard Houllier, as one player returns, others depart.

The Merseysiders must view their visit to Stamford Bridge as one of the last real opportunities to get back on the championship pace, but will be without key defenders Jamie Carragher and Rigobert Song. Carragher's three-match ban sidelines him until the Easter Saturday derby with Everton, while Song is on international duty with Cameroon.

However, Houllier will be the first to admit that the current Liverpool team rarely wins matches through its defensive prowess, instead counting on Michael Owen (right) and Robbie Fowler to enact their terrible twins show and pepper the opponent's goal instead.

Big guns still need a good supply of ammunition, though, and Patrik Berger, back in contention after his hamstring injury, may well figure in Houllier's plans. The Frenchman may consider reverting to a 4-4-2 formation in order to accommodate both Berger and Steve "Real deal" McManaman.

CHELSEA (from): De Goey, Hitchcock, Le Saux, Ferrer, Leboeuf, Desailly, Duberry, Lambourde, Terry, Babayaro, Petrescu, Goldback, Di Matteo, Morris, Nicholls, Newton, Zola, Flo, Forssell, Vialli.

LIVERPOOL (from): James, Heggem, Staunton, Matteo, Babb, Bjornebye, McManaman, Ince, Redknapp, Berger, Owen, Fowler, Riedle, Friedel, Ferri, Harkness, Thompson, Kvarme, Traore.

Suspensions: Liverpool: Carragher. **Chelsea:** Osborne, Percassi, Wise.

Referee: P Durkin.



Aston Villa v Coventry

Last season: 3-0

MIDFIELDER MARK DRAPER returns to the Aston Villa squad after five games out following an ankle operation. Alan Thompson is in danger of missing out as he continues to struggle with an ankle injury. The Villa manager, John Gregory, has to decide whether to recall central defender Gareth Barry as his side look to end the four-match losing sequence that has seen them move from title-contenders to 66-1 outsiders in a matter of weeks. Gregory rested England Under-21 international Barry for last weekend's goalless draw at Wimbledon. Goalkeeper Mark Bosnich, who has not played since damaging a shoulder against Coventry at Highfield Road in October, is struggling to make his long-awaited return.

Coventry's former Portsmouth striker John Aloisi and their Norwegian international midfielder Trond Egil Soltvedt are on stand-by to play. Aloisi will start if Noel Whelan fails a fitness test on an injured shoulder and Soltvedt will replace George Boateng if the Dutchman is still unwell. Coventry have been beaten home and away by Villa for the last three seasons.

ASTON VILLA (from) Oakes, Watson, Scimeca, Southgate, Barry, Wright, Taylor, Hendrie, Draper, Grayson, Thompson, Merson, Dublin, Joachim, Collymore, Samuel, Vassell, Enckelman.

COVENTRY CITY (from): Hedman, Nilsson, Williams, Shaw, Burrows, Telfer, Boateng, McAllister, Froggatt, Huckerby, Whelan, Aloisi, Soltvedt, Clement, Konjic, Breen, Edworthy, Ogrizovic.

Suspensions: None.

Referee: U Rennie.



Charlton v Nottingham Forest

Last season: 4-2



THE CHARLTON manager, Alan Curbishley, will be without defenders Eddie Youds and Richard Rufus for the relegation six-pointer with Nottingham Forest at The Valley. Youds is suffering with a knee injury while Rufus has broken his wrist, so Carl Tiler and Steve Brown are likely to be the centre-back pairing.

Ron Atkinson, the Nottingham Forest manager, will await news of a late fitness test on John Harkes before finalising his line-up. The experienced right-back missed last weekend's 3-1 defeat against Chelsea because of a calf injury but hopes to get the all clear to return.

Forest will definitely be without suspended pair Alan Rogers and Andy Johnson, while Jon Olav Hjelde and Hugo Porfirio are ruled out by groin and hamstring injuries respectively.

Stale Stensaas is likely to replace Rogers at left-back and Scot Gemmill is poised to take over from Johnson in midfield.

Charlton Athletic (from) Royce, Barnes, Barness, Beale, Bright, Brown, Fortune, Holmes, Hunt, Ilic, S Jones, K Jones, Kinsella, Konchesky, Lisbie, Mendonca, Mills, Mortimer, Newton, Parker, Powell, Pringle, Redfearn, Robinson, Tiler, Toms.

Nottingham Forest (from): Beasant, Harkes, Louis-Jean, Chettle, Palmer, Edwards, Mattsson, Stensaas, Stone, Quashie, Gemmill, Bonalair, Van Hooijdonk, Darcheville, Shipperley, Bart-Williams, Freedman, Woan, Crossley.

Suspensions: Nottingham Forest: Johnson, Rogers.

Referee: S Lodge.



Everton v Wimbledon

Last season: 0-0



DON HUTCHISON, Everton's newly converted striker, is out of today's game against Wimbledon because of a one-match suspension. Hutchison, who is on the brink of signing a new, long-term contract as well as a call-up for Scotland, will have to sit out the game at Goodison Park.

Also out for the home side is Ibrahima Bakayoko, who is away on international duty with the Ivory Coast for today's African Nations' Cup tie with Congo.

It means that the Everton manager Walter Smith will be left with a teenage strikeforce of Francis Jeffers and Danny Cadamarteri.

Michael Hughes returns to the Wimbledon squad after flu ruled him out of last Sunday's goalless draw against Aston Villa.

The visitors, who have not scored in their last six cup and League games, will be without Carl Leaburn, out with a thigh injury, and John Hartson is still banned. They have lost only one of their six Premiership visits to Everton but three of them have been goalless.

Everton (from): Myhre, Ball, Watson, Unsworth, Materazzi, Dunne, Oster, Weir, Dacourt, Barmby, Grant, Jeffers, Cadamarteri, Branch, Simonsen, Milligan, Jevons.

Wimbledon (from): Sullivan, Cunningham, Thatcher, Blackwell, Perry, M Hughes, Earle, Roberts, Euell, Ekoku, Gayle, Kennedy, C Hughes, Cort, Kimble, Heald.

Suspensions: Everton: Hutchison. **Wimbledon:** Hartson.

Referee: N Barry.



Manchester United v Southampton

Last season: 1-0

ALEX FERGUSON, the United manager, has to decide whether to risk Jaap Stam against Southampton at Old Trafford today. Stam has been having treatment on a hamstring injury all week and may start on the bench as Ferguson eyes next Wednesday's Champions' League quarter-final first leg match against Internazionale. United have no fresh injury worries, leaving Ferguson with plenty of options against the Saints.

Matt Le Tissier, Southampton's inconsistent midfielder, is poised to return to their starting line-up following injury. Le Tissier has been out for four weeks with a torn hamstring but made an untroubled comeback for the reserves in midweek. The Channel Islander is likely to replace Hassan Kachloul, the Moroccan international, who is away on international duty. Mark Hughes misses the game against his former club because of suspension. James Beattie, however, is optimistic of a return despite a groin injury, while Stuart Ripley is battling to recover from a calf problem. Francis Benali and Scott Marshall are both back in contention following long-term injuries.

MANCHESTER UNITED (from): Schmeichel, G Neville, Johnsen, Berg, Stam, Irwin, P Neville, Beckham, Keane, Butt, Scholes, Blomqvist, Giggs, Cole, Yorke, Solskjaer, Brown, van der Gouw.

SOUTHAMPTON: (from): Jones, Dodd, Monkou, Lundekvam, Colleter, Le Tissier, Marsden, Oakley, Bridge, Ostenstad, Beattie, Benali, Hiley, Marshall, D Hughes, Howells, Bradley, Monk, Moss.

Suspensions: Southampton: Hughes.

Referee: P Jones.

...And statistics

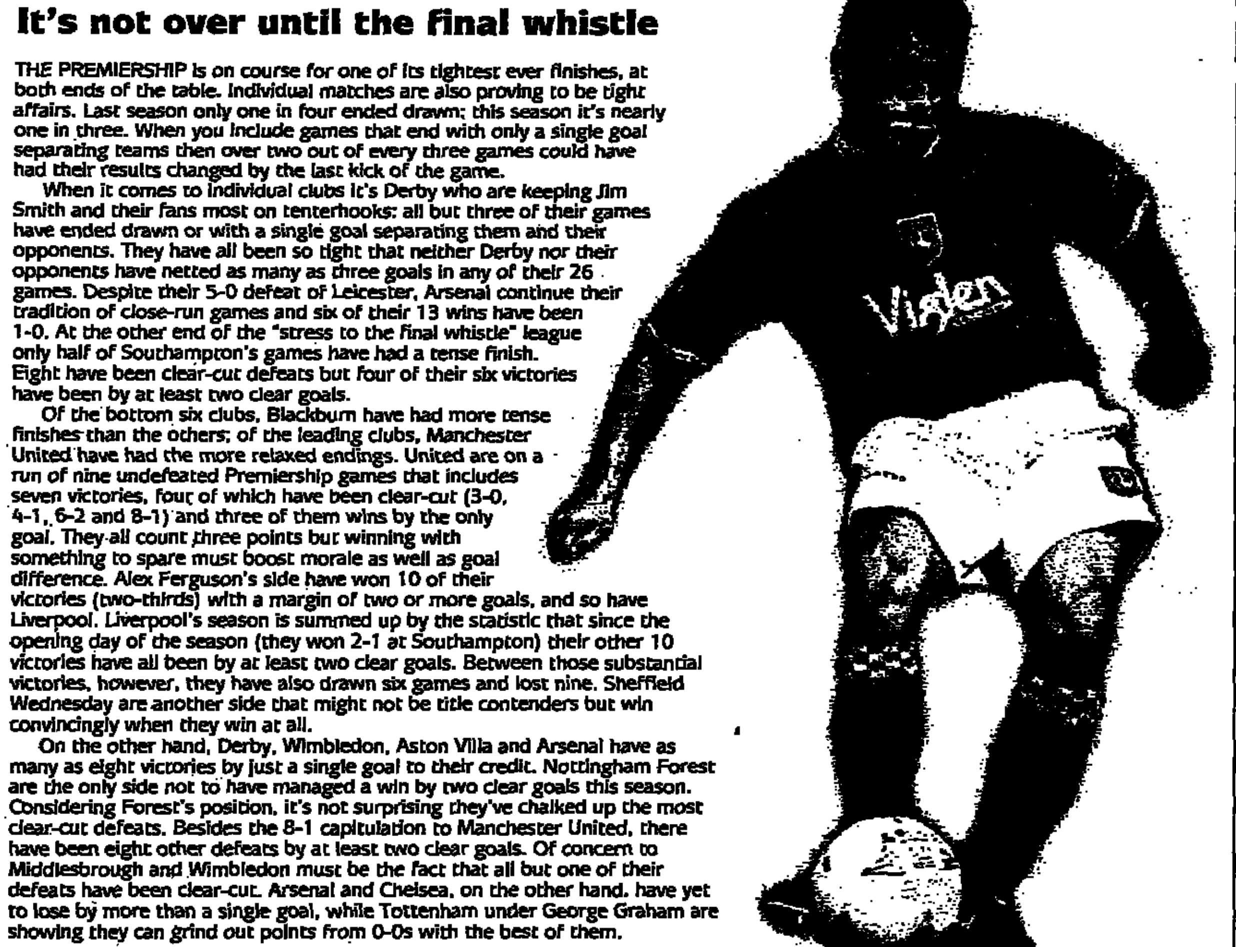
It's not over until the final whistle

THE PREMIERSHIP is on course for one of its tightest ever finishes, at both ends of the table. Individual matches are also proving to be tight affairs. Last season only one in four ended drawn; this season it's nearly one in three. When you include games that end with only a single goal separating teams then over two out of every three games could have had their results changed by the last kick of the game.

When it comes to individual clubs it's Derby who are keeping Jim Smith and their fans most on tenterhooks: all but three of their games have ended drawn or with a single goal separating them and their opponents. They have all been so tight that neither Derby nor their opponents have netted as many as three goals in any of their 26 games. Despite their 5-0 defeat of Leicester, Arsenal continue their tradition of close-run games and six of their 13 wins have been 1-0. At the other end of the "stress to the final whistle" league only half of Southampton's games have had a tense finish. Eight have been clear-cut defeats but four of their six victories have been by at least two clear goals.

Of the bottom six clubs, Blackburn have had more tense finishes than the others; of the leading clubs, Manchester United have had the more relaxed endings. United are on a run of nine undefeated Premiership games that includes seven victories, four of which have been clear-cut (3-0, 4-1, 6-2 and 8-1) and three of them wins by the only goal. They all count three points but winning with something to spare must boost morale as well as goal difference. Alex Ferguson's side have won 10 of their victories (two-thirds) with a margin of two or more goals, and so have Liverpool. Liverpool's season is summed up by the statistic that since the opening day of the season (they won 2-1 at Southampton) their other 10 victories have all been by at least two clear goals. Between those substantial victories, however, they have also drawn six games and lost nine. Sheffield Wednesday are another side that might not be title contenders but win convincingly when they win at all.

On the other hand, Derby, Wimbledon, Aston Villa and Arsenal have as many as eight victories by just a single goal to their credit. Nottingham Forest are the only side not to have managed a win by two clear goals this season. Considering Forest's position, it's not surprising they've chalked up the most clear-cut defeats. Besides the 8-1 capitulation to Manchester United, there have been eight other defeats by at least two clear goals. Of concern to Middlesbrough and Wimbledon must be the fact that all but one of their defeats have been clear-cut. Arsenal and Chelsea, on the other hand, have yet to lose by more than a single goal, while Tottenham under George Graham are showing they can grind out points from 0-0s with the best of them.



Clive Mendonca of Charlton, one of the clubs that has shown recently that it's too early yet to predict the season's winners and losers

Stalemates on the rise

Season	Drawn Games	Games played	% drawn
1992-93	130	462	28.1
1993-94	142	462	30.7
1994-95	134	462	29.0
1995-96	98	380	25.8
1996-97	119	380	31.3
1997-98	95	380	25.0
1998-99 (so far)	83	258	32.2

Tension to the end

Club	Total games	Drawn games or single goal in it	Stress factor (% close games)
Derby	26	23	88
Arsenal	26	21	81
Aston Villa	26	20	77
Blackburn	26	20	77
Chelsea	26	20	77
Wimbledon	25	19	76
Everton	26	19	73
Tottenham	25	18	72
Charlton	26	18	69

Winning in style

Club	Total wins	Wins by two+ goals
Liverpool	11	10
Manchester United	15	10
Sheff Wed	9	7
Leeds	11	7
Chelsea	13	6
Newcastle	9	5
Arsenal	13	5
Charlton	6	4
Southampton	6	4
Aston Villa	12	4
Leicester	7	3
Middlesbrough	7	3
Tottenham	7	3
West Ham	10	3
Blackburn	6	2
Coventry	6	2
Everton	6	2
Derby	9	1
Wimbledon	9	1
Nottingham Forest	3	0

George Graham – master of the 0-0 draw

Team	Games played with Graham as the manager	0-0s	%	Games played under other managers 1992-now	0-0s	%
Arsenal	112	18	16	154	20	13
Leeds	79	15	19	187	19	10
Tottenham	17	5	29	248	20	8

Clear cut defeats

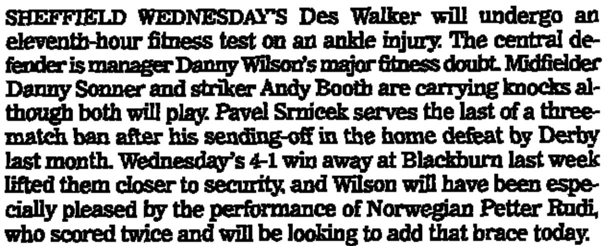
Club	Total defeats	Defeats by at least two clear goals
Nottingham Forest	16	9
Southampton	14	8
Coventry	14	6
Newcastle	10	6
West Ham	9	6
Middlesbrough	7	6
Wimbledon	7	6
Everton	11	5
Leicester	9	5
Blackburn	12	4
Charlton	12	4
Tottenham	7	4
Sheffield Wedneday	11	2
Liverpool	9	2
Derby	7	2
Aston Villa	6	2
Leeds	6	2
Manchester United	3	2
Arsenal	3	0
Chelsea	2	0

Anyone can beat anyone – some results from 1998-99

Manchester United won 8-1 against **Nottingham Forest**, who won 2-1 against **Southampton**, who won 2-1 against **Coventry**, who won 2-1 against **Chelsea**, who won 2-1 against **Aston Villa**, who won 3-2 against **Arsenal**, who won 5-0 against **Leicester**, who won 2-1 against **Tottenham**, who won 2-0 against **Newcastle**, who won 3-1 against **Wimbledon**, who won 2-1 against **Charlton**, who won 2-0 against **Derby**, who won 2-1 against **Liverpool**, who won 2-0 against **Blackburn**, who won 1-0 against **Leeds**, who won 4-0 against **West Ham**, who won 2-1 against **Everton**, who won 5-0 against **Middlesbrough**, who 4-0 against **Sheffield Wednesday**, who won 3-1 against **Manchester United**, who won...

Statistics: Brian Sears/ Nick Harris





Sheff Wed v Middlesbrough

Last season: No fixture

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY'S Des Walker will undergo an eleventh-hour fitness test on an ankle injury. The central defender is manager Danny Wilson's major fitness doubt. Midfielder Danny Sonner and striker Andy Booth are carrying knocks although both will play. Pavel Srnicek serves the last of a three-match ban after his sending-off in the home defeat by Derby last month. Wednesday's 4-1 win away at Blackburn last week lifted them closer to security, and Wilson will have been especially pleased by the performance of Norwegian Petter Rudi, who scored twice and will be looking to add that brace today.

Middlesbrough's Curtis Fleming will be out for the rest of the season, having had surgery on a troublesome knee cartilage injury. Gianluca Festa will also be missing at Hillsborough with a hamstring problem. Manager Bryan Robson will be able to include Colombian Hamilton Ricard, who has recovered from an ankle injury. Boro have won two of their three visits to Hillsborough since the Premiership started but are currently without a win in their last nine League matches.

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY (from) Pressman, Atherton, Jonk, Newsome, Walker, Carbone, Booth, Sanetti, Coblan, Humphreys, Briscoe, Stefanovic, Oakes, Hinchcliffe, Emerson, Rudi, Alexandersson, Sonner, Clarke.

MIDDLESBROUGH (from): Schwarzer, Beresford, Stockdale, Cooper, Vickers, Pallister, Gordon, Mustoe, Gascoigne, Townsend, Beck, Ricard, Summerbell, Maddison, Campbell, Moore, Harrison.

Suspensions: Wednesday: Srnicek.

Referee: M Riley.



Tottenham v Derby

Last season: 1-0

TOTTENHAM MUST do without Les Ferdinand who was carried off during their FA Cup fifth-round replay victory against Leeds on Wednesday. He was concussed, as he was against Middlesbrough last Saturday, and is likely to be replaced by Chris Armstrong. Defender Ramon Vega is likely to shake off the effects of an ankle knock with George Graham's only other absentee being John Scales.

Derby are likely to field 10 of the side that beat Huddersfield in the FA Cup on Wednesday. Only the suspended captain Igor Stimac will miss out. Jacob Laursen is back after serving a one-match ban and Spencer Prior could also return to the defence after missing the Cup tie because of a family illness.

Darryl Powell injured his neck in training this week so is not available for the first of two trips in eight days to north London for Derby. Their last win at White Hart Lane was in November 1989.

Tottenham Hotspur (from) Walker, Carr, Freund, Anderton, Edinburgh, Ginola, Vega, Iversen, Campbell, Sherwood, Baardsen, Nielsen, Armstrong, Sinton, Young, Fox, Taricco.

Derby County: (from): Hoult, Prior, Laursen, Carbonari, Schnoor, Eranio, Carsley, Bohinen, Dorigo, Baiano, Burton, Wanchope, Poom, Sturridge, Delap, Harper, Hunt, Elliott.

Suspensions: Tottenham: Carr. **Derby:** Stimac.

Referee: J Winter.





West Ham v Blackburn

Last season: 2-1

WEST HAM, cheered by last week's fightback at Anfield to steal a point, should have Rio Ferdinand at the heart of their defence as usual for the visit of Blackburn to Upton Park. The England defender has been troubled by a back problem since the 2-2 draw at Anfield but he came through a training session yesterday. Further good news for manager Harry Redknapp is that Paolo Di Canio and Paul Kitson are fit again to add some much-needed guile to the Hammers front line. Joe Cole has thrown off a virus to declare himself fit for action.

Jason McAteer and Matt Jansen look certain to return to Blackburn's line-up to boost the Lancashire club's battle against relegation. The duo, part of manager Brian Kidd's extensive rebuilding plans, were both cup-tied for the midweek FA Cup exit to Newcastle, but Rovers have a host of bad news to offset their return. Jeff Kenna suffered a calf muscle tear against Newcastle and is likely to be missing for up to two months. Chris Sutton, Christian Dailly and Stephane Henchoz are still missing, while Garry Flitcroft and Billy McKinlay are both out for the season.

WEST HAM UNITED (from): Hislop, Pearce, Ferdinand, Potts, Minto, Keller, Lazaridis, Lomas, Lampard, Foé, Berkovic, Sinclair, Kitson, Cole, Di Canio, Forrest, Holligan, Hodges, Abou.

BLACKBURN ROVERS (from): Filan, Peacock, Broomes, Davidson, Gillespie, Marcolin, Wilcox, Duff, Blake, Davies, Croft, Dunn, Flowers, Ward, Johnson, Jansen, McAteer.

Suspensions: None.

Referee: S Dunn.

MONDAY 8PM

Leicester v Leeds

Last season: 1-0



FILBERT STREET on Monday night will see the meeting of two sides desperate to put disappointing defeats behind them. Seven days ago Leicester manager Martin O'Neill watched in disbelief as his team, usually so full of defiance in the face of superior forces, crumbled to the tune of 5-0 at Arsenal. Leeds' manager David O'Leary will also want to banish a painful memory, that of George Graham sending his former club tumbling out of the FA Cup at Tottenham in midweek. O'Leary now knows that the Premiership is his last hope for European action next season, but has often said that he expects his gaggle of young players to tire as the season reaches its climax. He will have been cheered this week by the news that his combative England midfielder David Batty should be back in action just as Leeds' fledglings are feeling the pace.

O'Neill forced his Foxes squad to sit through a re-run of the Highbury horror show on video, which must have made gruesome viewing. Although the club are through to their second League Cup final in three years, things are less than rosy in the Premiership. Leicester are without a win since Boxing Day and have slipped perilously into the bottom seven after collecting just three points from the last six games.

TOMORROW (4PM)



Newcastle v Arsenal

Last season: 0-1

NEWCASTLE WILL give fitness tests to the flu-stricken Alan Shearer and Didier Domi ahead of tomorrow's game with the champions Arsenal at St James' Park. Domi is expected to recover but Shearer remains a doubt and if the England captain fails a late fitness test Louis Saha, who scored the only goal in the FA Cup replay against Blackburn on Wednesday, will deputise once again.

Midfielder Stephen Glass will also have to prove he is ready to return from a knee injury, while new signing Silvio Maric is short of match fitness after his move from Croatia Zagreb.

"I'm very happy to come to Newcastle because it's a big club and I come from a small country," he said. "I played against Newcastle in the qualification for the Champions' League two years ago so I know some of the players.

"I need some time but I'm looking forward to playing in the Premiership."

Ruud Gullit was enthusiastic about his new signing. "Silvio is a player we followed for a couple of months and gives us more quality in the team," he said.

Central defender Martin Keown returns for Arsenal after four games out with a hamstring injury but their midfielder Emmanuel Petit faces another two weeks on the sidelines after a slight setback to his ankle injury.

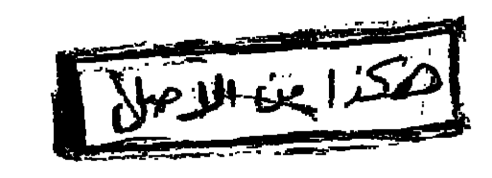
The visitors have achieved Premiership doubles the past two seasons and have an opportunity to make it three having won the first game at Highbury 3-0. They also secured last year's double against Newcastle with a 2-0 win in the FA Cup Final.

Newcastle United (from): Given, Harper, Barton, Domi, Griffin, Charvet, Howey, Dabizas, Hamann, Speed, Solano, Glass, Brady, Lee, Shearer, Ketsbaia, Saha, Dalglish.

Arsenal (from): Seaman, Vivas, Winterburn, Adams, Bould, Keown, Parlour, Vieira, Hughes, Overmars, Anelka, Bergkamp, Kanu, Diawara, Grimandi, Garde, Manninger.

Suspensions: None.

Referee: M Reed.





SPORT

BRITAIN'S HEAVYWEIGHT BURDEN P22 ● YORKE, THE £12.6M BARGAIN P30

Rusedski hits the heights

TENNIS

BY JOHN ROBERTS
in Battersea

THE BRITISH challenge continues in the £510,000 Guardian Direct Cup today. Greg Rusedski produced some of his finest tennis to defeat Sweden's Thomas Enqvist 7-5, 4-6, 6-3 in the quarter-finals yesterday.

Rusedski saved his best for the final set, minimising Enqvist's prospects with an impressive display of returning serve to complement his increasingly confident attacking game. "If I play like that I'll be back in the top five," Rusedski said.

The British No 2 needs to consolidate his position, which is No 10 in the world at the moment. He has a heap of ranking points to defend next month at Indian Wells, California, where he reached the final last March before losing to the Chilean Marcelo Rios.

There were phases during yesterday's match when Rusedski, the No 3 seed, seemed vulnerable against Enqvist, seeded sixth, who was the runner-up to Yevgeny Kafelnikov at the Australian Open. But fears that Rusedski would be overhauled quickly disappeared once he had broken to take a 4-2 lead in the third set. He finished with a total of 20 aces to Enqvist's 16. Perhaps even more significant, the Swede committed 10 double-faults to Rusedski's three during the one hour and 38 minutes' play.

Rusedski made a brisk start, although his early successes were deceptive, often gained as a result of his opponent's errors. The Swede, for example, double-faulted twice in the second game before hitting a backhand long from Rusedski's second service return to be broken for 0-2.



The British No 2, Greg Rusedski, delivers a backhand on his way to a 7-5, 4-6, 6-3 victory over Thomas Enqvist at Battersea Park yesterday *Allsport*

Enqvist immediately had an opportunity to get back into the set, but Rusedski was able to save a break point with a forehand drive and was rather fortunate with his touch on a forehand volley on the last point. Rusedski then had two break points for a 4-0 lead, which would have been flattering. Instead, Enqvist managed to salvage his first game.

After putting together three aces in taking a 4-1 lead, Rusedski was unable to deny Enqvist in the seventh game, the Swede delivering a fierce return off a second serve. Rusedski got his racket to the ball, but could only watch as it flew out of bounds. Games went with serve until 6-5, although Rusedski voiced his disappointment with a line call before saving a break point.

The concluding game of the set provided welcome entertainment. Enqvist, leading 30-15 on serve, was involved in a long rally of improvised shots. The Swede retrieved an angled forehand by Rusedski and then returned a lob between his legs. Rusedski made the mistake of placing his next shot on Enqvist's racket – but the Swede obliged by netting a forehand. Enqvist followed that by missing a backhand volley to offer a set point, which Rusedski converted.

Both players disputed line calls and overules in the second set. Rusedski may have been lucky at times in the opening set, but Enqvist benefited when his forehand was ruled good on break point, enabling him to start his comeback by breaking for 1-0. Rusedski, who ought to have done better with an earlier overhead, showed his disdain by picking up the ball and placing it on the line.

Enqvist held for 2-0 and both players indulged in a silly example of tit-for-tat in the third game. Enqvist lifted the ball and placed it beyond the service line after Rusedski claimed a serve had been good. Rusedski responded by jumping over the net and putting another ball on the line.

By now the aces were flowing. Rusedski advanced his tally to 14 – with a second serve – in saving two set points at 4-5. Enqvist also delivered his 14th ace when serving for the set and, after hitting successive double-faults, he managed to draw level after 72 minutes.

Rusedski proved to have more in reserve, and was particularly pleased with his service returns. "They're not as stylish as Korda's or Agassi's," he conceded, "but I'm making them deep and putting them in the corners."

He now plays the gifted but erratic Morrocan Hicham Arazi in the semi-finals. Asked if he had decided to switch permanently to the new Donnay racket he is using, Rusedski just smiled and said: "I'm just trying it." He added: "But the racket has a 7-2 win-loss record at the moment."

Richard Krajicek, the 1996 Wimbledon champion, seeded No 4 here, overpowered Karol Kucera, the fourth seed, 6-1, 6-3 after only 53 minutes. The Slovak had not been on the back foot so often since Pete Sampras wiped the court with him in Hanover last November to celebrate a sixth consecutive year as the world No 1.

Krajicek returned to the Netherlands to attend the funeral this morning of his Dutch compatriot Menno Oosting, who was killed in a car crash this week. A private aircraft will bring Krajicek back to London for the semi-finals.

Results, Digest, age 26

Coach backs Henman over Kafelnikov jibe

TIM HENMAN'S coach yesterday defended Britain's No 1 after criticism that he is not focused on climbing to the top of the world rankings.

David Felgate was responding to comments from Yevgeny Kafelnikov, who has urged Henman to cut down on his sponsorship commitments if he wants to becoming one of the game's great players.

Felgate said: "When Tim wins the press don't seem to have too many complaints. Then when he loses they are looking for a story or a reason why he played a bad match. Tim has some great sponsors whom he serves very well. They are fantastic with his time. I can't remember the last time he spent a day this year doing anything for them.

"It is beyond belief that any time he doesn't play so well there are questions asked. He is seventh in the world. There are six players better than him, and his aim is to get to No 1. He can't be doing too many things too badly."

Cardiff look to cash in at Sale

RUGBY UNION

BY CHRIS HEWETT

SALE, THE only élite club in the North-west of England, last night emerged as the latest target for an increasingly predatory Cardiff, who are looking to leave the chaotic Welsh scene behind by buying their way into the Allied Dunbar Premiership. The Sale management board rejected reports that a deal had been agreed, but sources at the Arms Park said Cardiff officials were confident of completing a takeover in the near future.

Cardiff are also thought to have made overtures to Bedford and West Hartlepool, two other struggling Premiership outfits, but Sale would be much the most attractive proposition.

The consortium currently financing the side owns only the players, the staff and the fixture list; the ownership of the Heywood Road ground and infrastructure lies with the old amateur club. The Welshmen would be only too happy to incorporate Sale's top-ranked players – Shane Howarth, David Rees, Steve Hanley and Dion O'Cuinneagain – into a squad already boasting a full hand of international talent.

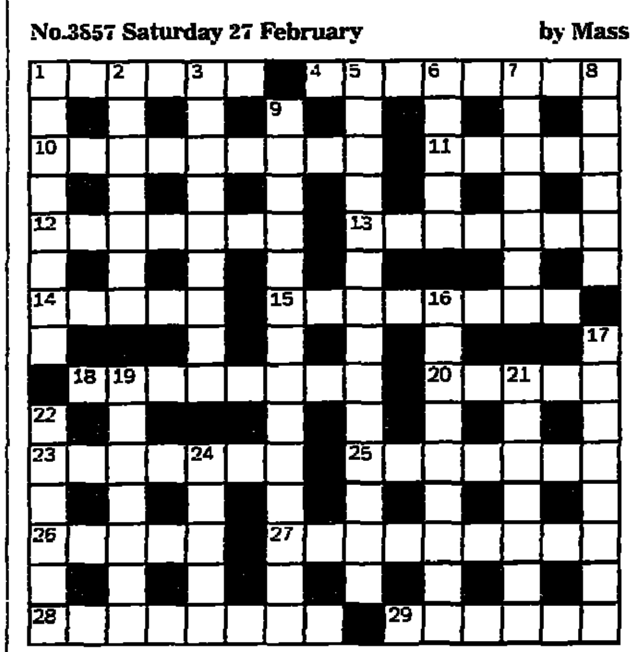
Peter Thomas, the financial power behind Cardiff and an implacable opponent of the Welsh Rugby Union, met his players earlier this week and assured them they would be playing Allied Dunbar rugby next season. Cardiff and Swansea have been playing unsanctioned friendly matches against English opposition since last September and the rebel clubs were fined by the WRU before Christmas. But though the fines are due to be paid this weekend, Thomas has no intention of coughing up. If the fines remain outstanding, the WRU will almost certainly suspend both clubs from union membership next month.

Earlier this week, Tom Walkinshaw, the chairman of English First Division Rugby, indicated that "initiatives were in progress" to resolve the Cardiff and Swansea issue. Although he refused to expand, he said he was confident that the problem of the rebel Welsh clubs would be resolved in time for next season. Regulations do not prevent the purchase of one club by another, but any Welsh purchase of an English club would involve the International Rugby Board and throw the British game into more chaos.

More rugby, page 23

THE SATURDAY CROSSWORD

No.3557 Saturday 27 February by Mass



ACROSS

1 This setter's in a jam (6)
4 Note's reverberating, smooth and rich (8)
10 Local school on isle, second amongst closures (9)
11 Carpenter's initial pine supply (5)
12 Ship's tackle and sheets - both sound (7,
13 This makes one tear in ? Must be wrong (7)
14 Greek character of handsome Galatea (5)
15 Driving instructor (8)
18 Agree with shrink (8)
20 Round gold coin (5)
23 Pace is relaxed around mid-January - good sign (7)
25 Digital factor making transmitted resonance suffer? (7)
26 Europeans with no advanced Northern origins (5)
27 Pay's made up with dud note? Lumme! (9)
28 Bars before flues (8)
29 Against lines in speech by American (6)

DOWN

1 Draught is rising in office (8)
2 Drug, killer, taken between joint and Ecstasy (7)
3 Branch managed, held by Italian peripatetic (9)
5 Assuming rank's a place for a taxi occasionally? (7,7)
6 Charm secures Conservative gain (5)
7 Letter has names responsible for fires (7)
8 Old-time citizen's article on prohibition (6)
9 A footnote? (14)
16 Sue's writing with diminished energy (9)
17 Ancient ascetics, types without sex appeal (8)
19 Monitor outside broadcast covering minister (7)
21 Those cruising for fish, casting line (7)
22 Close call (4,2)
24 Run for exit (5)

Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardbacked copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P. O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: W Marlar, Woolhope; J Blunden, Welwyn Garden City; S Chase, Hall Green; L Pitman, Greenway; G Maclennan, Dublin.

Di Canio set for FA meeting

FOOTBALL

BY TOMMY STANIFORTH

AN OFFICIAL from the Football Association is to meet the Italian striker Paolo Di Canio after his latest comments about the referee, Paul Alcock.

West Ham's controversial striker cast doubt on Alcock's claims that he suffered physically as a result of Di Canio pushing him over after being sent off while playing for Sheffield Wednesday against Arsenal at Hillsborough last September.

The Italian earned an 11-match ban for the offence, and the FA is determined to prevent any further detrimental moves by the Italian by serving a warning to him in person.

"The FA compliance officer, Graham Bean, will be meeting with Paolo Di Canio next week to discuss his remarks with a view to warning him about his future conduct," an FA spokesman said. "We feel that it is obviously time to draw a line under this episode."

Tottenham have been accused of making an illegal approach to the Ipswich coach Stewart Houston in their attempts to persuade him to become George Graham's No 2.

The move comes as little surprise, given that during their five years together at Arsenal from 1990 Graham and Houston won the title in 1991, a domestic cup double in 1993 and the Cup-Winners' Cup in 1994.

The Ipswich chairman, David Sheepshanks, said that he had failed in his attempts to hold Houston to his contract and claimed that Tottenham had contacted the coach a full month before finally making an official approach. He has made formal complaints to the Premier League and the Football League and is still attempting to receive compensation. Sheepshanks, the deputy chairman of the Football League, added that Houston would be leaving Ipswich after today's game at Bristol City against his wishes.

Paul Merson has spoken of his relief at being reunited with his family after fearing for their safety as they were caught up in the Alps avalanche disaster. The Aston Villa forward's wife and three children were cut off for seven days during a skiing holiday in Austria.

"You look at those sort of things happening on television and you don't pay that much attention," Merson said. "But then, when you've got your own family right in the middle of it, it really scares you to death."

Everton's manager, Walter Smith, hopes to sign Kevin Campbell, currently in dispute with Trabzonspor, on loan for the rest of the season. The former Arsenal striker wants to leave the Turkish side after falling out with the chairman.

IN MONDAY'S 12-PAGE SPORTS SECTION



This season's *Serie A* title looks beyond their reach, Ronaldo's continuing knee problems mean he misses today's match against Juventus and next week Manchester United stand in their path in the Champions' League. Are Internazionale in crisis? RICHARD WILLIAMS reports from Milan

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THE INDEPENDENT

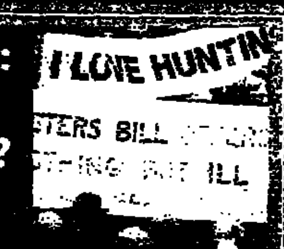
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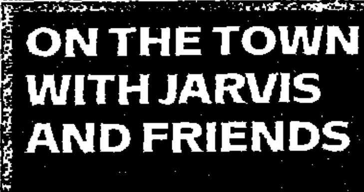
WEEKEND REVIEW

COMMENT • ARTS & BOOKS • COUNTRY & GARDEN • TRAVEL

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ON THE TOWN WITH JARVIS AND FRIENDS
TRAVEL, PAGE 21



BY TIM LOTT

Once, I almost wrote a book called *The Hungry Heart: One Man's Quest To Understand How Women Think About Food*. I never wrote it because I thought I would never achieve the quest, and perhaps also because I was frightened of trespassing on such intimate territory.

Nevertheless, I remain fascinated by the way women relate to food – how it has a whole series of layers of meaning for them that seem to be more or less absent from the male psyche. How it often represents control, and love, and guilt, and self-punishment, and communication. How so many women I have met experience anxiety and even fear in relation to food. How beliefs about food operate almost as a small-scale secular religion, including as they do themes of purity, redemption, sin and virtue.

To help me to understand the subject better, I sat down to dinner with three women and discussed, for an evening, how they feel about food. During the meal I frequently felt that I existed, as a man, in a parallel universe – that the matters that they found compelling and which had a powerful effect on their behaviour were a mystery to me.

Writer Tim Lott, left, discusses food obsessions with Brix Smith, centre, Susie Orbach, right, and Jane Green (out of shot) over dinner at Julie's Restaurant *Magali Delporte*

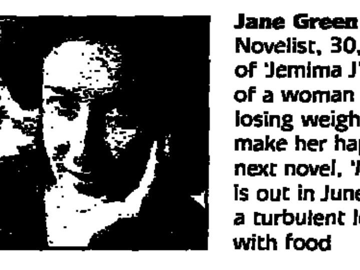


The dinner party

Jane Green: I'm pretty frightened of food really. I was never very good at expressing emotion, so I try to express emotion through food.
Tim Lott: (to Brix Smith): Tell me if there's anything on this menu that you find disgusting?
Brix Smith: Almost everything. Not on a major level but in terms of how fattening it is, and how it's prepared. Every time I go out to eat with anybody, it's the same, unless I'm incredibly low – and then I feel I deserve something. It's a reward.
Tim: For what?
Brix: No it's not a reward, it's a comfort. If I've had a really hard day, if it's been really stressful, I need it. If I'm in a bad state, I immediately want to throw it up.
Tim: Which of these dishes make you go aaaaaargh?
Brix: You look at things like Cajun spiced goats' cheese. I mean, that sounds good on its own, but it's in filo pastry so that's out... It all starts off good then ends up bad. Look: stir-fried mangetout...
Tim: What are the toxic words for you?
Brix: Deep-fried.
Tim: Is it the amount of fat it involves that makes you nervous?
Jane: I worry about carbs: pastry, pasta, bread...
Brix: I'm looking at asparagus, lemon juice and oil – but then it's in puff pastry with a lime hollandaise. That's just sinful.
Tim: Sinful. That's an interesting word, as though it's about morality.
Brix: It's characterised by the feeling that if I've had a good day, it's because I've eaten well.
Susie: By which you mean you've eaten according to the set of rules which you have laid down for yourself.
Tim: Is that about keeping chaos at bay?
Brix: Yes.
Susie: So how do you manage a menu like this?
Brix: I will have gazpacho and then I will have salad. The rocket salad. But I won't have the *croûtons* or the bacon. That seems safe. I used to be so bad when I first came here [from California] that I would carry my own skimmed milk in my bag so I could have a cappuccino with skimmed milk – and it used to drive everyone crazy.
Tim: Do you think what you eat has an effect on your mood?
Brix and Jane: Absolutely!
Jane: At the end of every day, you go over what you've eaten: has it been a good day or a bad day? You are a good person or a bad person depending on that.
Tim: This is almost universally reported among women. It's become a kind of moral system: a way of assessing whether you are a good person. A man would not get that feeling.
Jane: Exercise is the same thing.
Tim: Overcoming sloth or greed?
Brix: I used to be obsessed with exercise, as well. It's really vicious – it makes you feel you've done something today.
Tim: How much of your time do you spend thinking about these issues?
Brix: What takes up a lot of time for me is combining: you don't mix protein or carbohydrates, so there are a lot of calculations.
Jane: Does anyone have an uncomplicated relationship with food?
Susie: I have had issues around it, but it was a very long time ago.
Jane: So you actually managed to put those issues to rest?
Susie: I hope so, yes.
Jane: That for me is extraordinary, because I think once you do have issues with food you're going to have them for the rest of your life.
Susie: I don't believe that. I don't believe it's like being alcoholic. The beauty of it is, because you have the option to eat every time you're hungry you get to solve your problem if you can dare to eat what you are actually hungry for.
Tim: What's the daring about?
Susie: How terrorising food can be for women, which then sets up the idea that these foods are bad and dangerous, these foods are good...
Tim: The thing is to rediscover a sort of natural relationship with food.
Jane: When I was a teenager, I lost that relationship. Of course, what was good and bad food then was very different.
Susie: Nutritional theory changes every year.
Tim: Then potatoes and pasta were the food of the devil; now they're good. Now purity has become a really huge issue.
Jane: With organic food.



Susie Orbach
Now 52, author of 'Fat is a Feminist Issue'. A therapist, she specialises in eating disorders. Her latest book, 'The Impossibility of Sex', comes out in May. Any problems she had with food are over



Jane Green
Novelist, 30, author of 'Jemima J', the story of a woman who finds losing weight doesn't make her happy. Her next novel, 'Mr Maybe', is out in June. She has a turbulent love affair with food



Brix Smith
A musician, she grew up in California and moved to London. She played guitar with rock band The Fall. Now 32, she will shortly be presenting a new fashion programme. She is always on a diet

Tim: In several ways. Not just the purity of the food, but whether or not it will kill you.
Susie: Whether it's psychically poisoning.
Tim: Preservatives, when I was a kid, were considered a boon; now they're a problem. We used to know what we were eating. Now we don't know what the hell it's going to do, or what the long-term effects are going to be. Somehow, food has come to represent purity.
Susie: This goes back to the moral issue. You're making a moral statement about what you are like in relation to what you consume.
Tim: What is the moral statement you are making? That you're strong enough?
Jane: I don't care what it's got in it, so long as it doesn't make me fat. I remember stuffing my face with fat-free, sugar-free yoghurt and not caring that it had a billion terrible things in it.
Brix: I wouldn't say I binge, but I allow myself to combine improperly. Sometimes I can't control it. In my worst stages it will be, like, I've had two cookies now, I've fucked myself for the day, I might as well keep going. I feel very angry with myself because I've failed, I've lost control.
Susie: What was eating like in your household when you were growing up?
Brix: My mother's a model. She was stick- thin. She had an eating problem, which I did not know until I grew up and she told me. My mother had anxiety attacks, she was afraid of choking, so she had only liquid. My father was a Beverly Hills psychiatrist and now he's chief of staff at a state institute for the criminally insane. I started going to a shrink at the age of 12 and I kept going until about 32. I was a very, very skinny child. I only wanted to eat McDonald's or chocolate. So my father would say, "You have to eat. If you do not eat this egg, I will sit on you and shove it down your throat". I was about six when that started. I would eat the egg, then go and throw up. I wouldn't even have to make myself, I just would throw up. Then it became like a weird control thing; I wanted him to love me, so I ate more and more, until I became a chubby teenager. He would say, "Gee, you could be so beautiful if you would just lose weight. I will pay you five dollars for every pound you lose, and when you lose 20 pounds, I will buy you a whole new wardrobe."
Tim: How do you feel when you get on the scales and you've put on weight?
Brix: I can't bear to get on the scales at the moment. I can't bear to look. I only get on them when I feel very thin.
Tim: Can you explain food-combining?
Brix: You can't have protein and carbohydrate at the same time...
Tim: This scientifically makes *no* sense.
Brix: But it always, like, seems to make complete sense.
Susie: It's a way of managing food. It's OK. Makes you feel safe.
Brix: Well, I also feel better in terms of digestion and what goes into my stomach. It's like the Hay diet and the Montignac diet. You have to have fruit on an empty stomach.
Tim: Why do you believe this?
Brix: It just makes complete sense.
Tim: There are thousands of theories. Why do you believe this one?
Brix: When I tried the Hay diet and really worked hard at it and ate all-organic food, I felt great. I felt I was glowing and my eyes were clear and I was healthy.
Jane: As for no carbohydrates, it's not that I think that carbs are intrinsically bad, but for me they are my trigger food. When I get cravings, it's always for bread or pasta.
Susie: Do you think if you had them in your daily diet, you might neutralise that?
Jane: It's far too frightening even to contemplate.
Susie: Why don't you just eat bread?
Jane: I think I would balloon.
Susie: But you might find at that point that bread no longer became that magical for you.
Jane: I don't think I can do that.
Tim: Have you ever been obese?
Jane: No, but I've been a stone heavier.
Tim: And did that make you miserable?
Jane: Yes.
Tim: I'm very struck by the passion with which people who have theories about food believe in them, whereas in fact it's very hard to know these things. Fashions change at incredible pace, but while they are in force, people believe in them very strongly. Food knowledge has become a kind

Continued on page 2

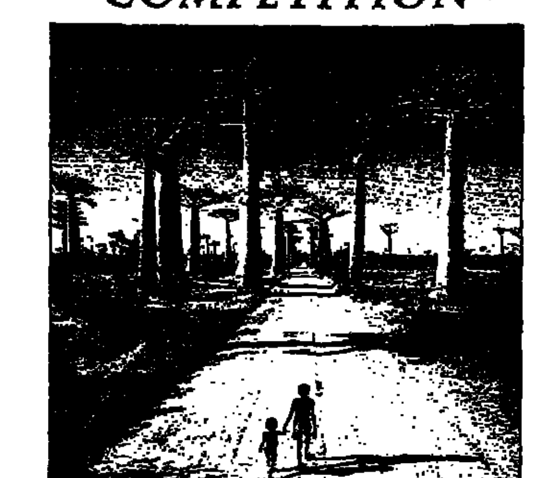


INSIDE

TRAVEL

TOMORROW IN
THE INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

COMPETITION



£15,000-worth of prizes TO BE WON for the best black-and-white images on the theme of celebration

Alain de Botton



Rulers should be ready to deceive, kill and torture

Simon Singh



You may find whale-eating enzymes nibbling your mucky T-shirts

AN Wilson



The Dome has as much to do with Christian tradition as Burger King

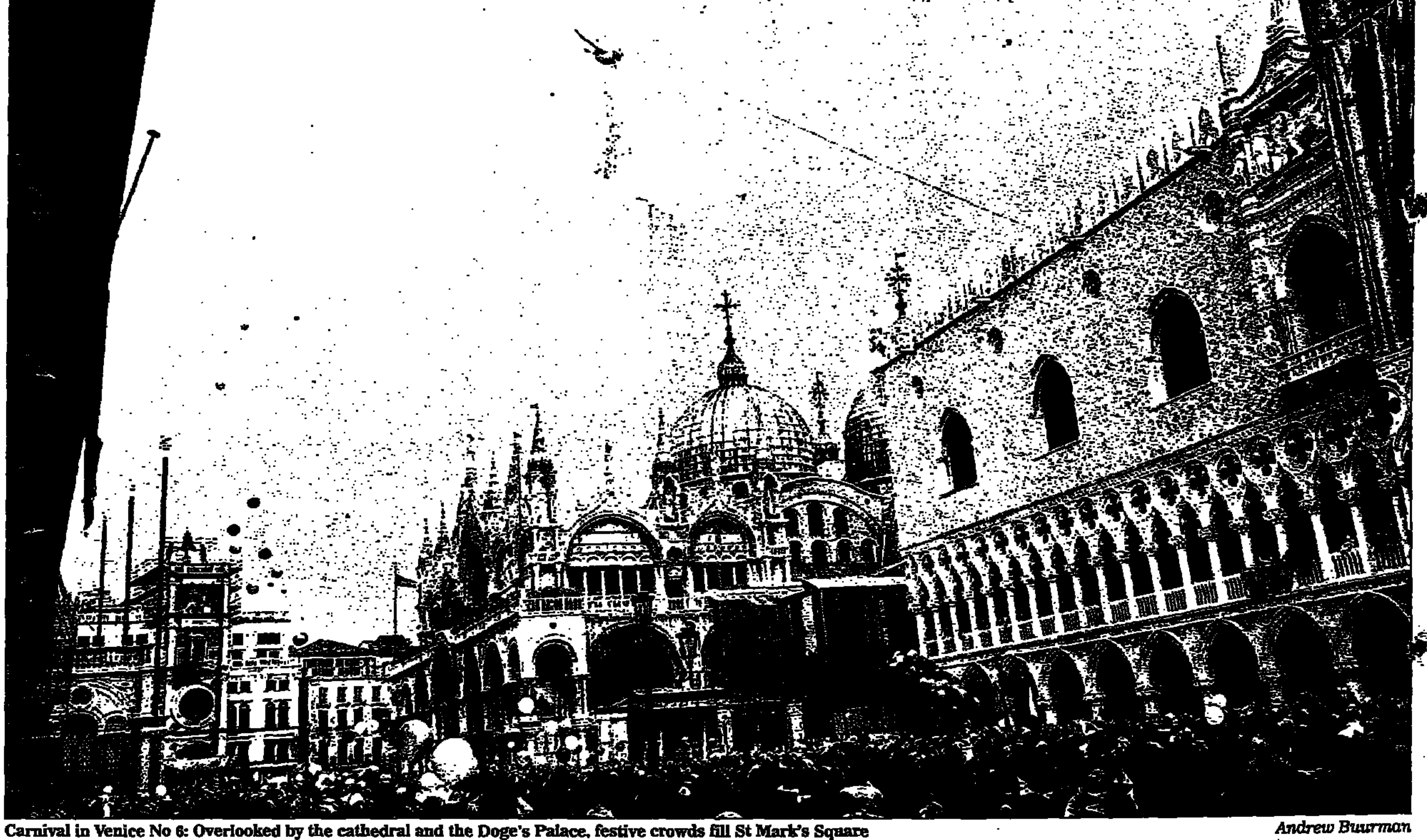
CULTURE



Sorting the men from the boys: Trevor Nunn explains why it takes guts to direct Shakespeare

PLUS
Geoffrey Robertson and Darcus Howe on the Lawrence Inquiry

Natasha Walter replies to Germaine Greer



Carnival in Venice No 6: Overlooked by the cathedral and the Doge's Palace, festive crowds fill St Mark's Square — Andrew Buurman

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5DL and include a daytime telephone number, fax to 0171 293 2056 or e-mail to letters@independent.co.uk (e-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address). Letters may be edited for length and clarity

Condon 'myopic'

Sir: Sir Paul Condon remains woefully myopic when he clings to the linguistic opportunities posed by the adjective "unwitting", instead of seeing institutional racism as a component part of a much larger picture.

Tony Blair is right when he says we should honestly confront racism. We live in a sophisticated society with sophisticated prejudices. Overt racism of the kind that killed Stephen is all too common in Britain. Covert racism, for which there has been no report, but under which many individuals bring claims through the Race Relations Act every year, is also alarmingly pervasive.

Macpherson's findings of institutional racism only confirms what those of us who are black have always known. It is a welcome addition to our national dialogue and to some extent completes the circle. We need now to continue the dialogue that has begun between our diverse communities, if only to ensure that it doesn't take another tragedy to bring this to the public's attention.

DAVID LAMMY
London NW1

Sir: Since Sir Paul Condon has been Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police we have been involved in supporting and advising the families of black people who have died in police custody – Joy Gardner (1993), Shiji Lapite (1994), Brian Douglas (1995), Wayne Douglas, (1995) and Ibrahima Sey (1996).

They have been killed or seriously injured by punches, kicks, neck holds, hit over the head by batons, placed in body restraints, had tape put over their mouths, held face down on the floor so they could not breathe and left seriously injured in cells without medical attention.

In January 1999 Roger Sylvester, died after being restrained by eight Metropolitan police officers in Tottenham. Following his death Metropolitan Police spin doctors have put into the public domain partial and inaccurate information designed to deflect attention from their actions and turn Mr Sylvester into a racist stereotype and blame him for his own death.

We have no confidence that the Metropolitan Police have learnt any lessons from these appalling deaths.

If confidence is ever to be restored in the police the Government must also act to address the lack of accountability at all stages in the investigative and disciplinary processes following deaths in police custody that deny bereaved families justice, send a clear message that these deaths do not matter and that police crime will never be subject to the full force of the law.

DEBORAH COLES
HELEN SHAW
Co-Directors
Inquest, London N4

Sir: With the greatest of respect to the Rev John Thewlis (letter, 26 February) whom I know by reputation as a good and generous man, it has to be pointed out that he always wears his cleric's garb when he is out in the community and I would be very surprised if people did not watch what they were saying in his presence.

I have lived in this area for 13 years, not very far from where Stephen was murdered. I am white and am regularly appalled by what my neighbours think is perfectly acceptable to say.

A great number of the people who live here are disgustingly, sickeningly racist. It is part of the culture. I have heard things said that I could hardly bear to repeat and often from people who preface what they say with "I am not racist but ..."

LESLEY DAVIS
London SE9

Cash for the arts

Sir: One of the "real challenges" facing Peter Hewitt (Right of Reply, 25 February) must be how to maintain the pretence that the Arts Council "is currently cutting its staffing by half".

He must know that the Arts Council Staffing Proposal of January 1999 suggests that staff should be cut from 255.8 full-time equivalent posts in December 1998 to 181.6 full-time equivalent posts. That is a reduction of 29 per cent – and the final total only 25 less than the staffing level of 206 declared in the accounts for 1996/97!

In November, *Arts Council News* told us that "the Arts Council's full complement of staff is 322. When plans are finalised, a staff of around 150 is expected". The Staffing Proposal says that "the number of agreed posts in the current structure is 312.7 full-time equivalent posts". Who agreed to this unprecedented recruiting drive over the past two years?

Mr Hewitt boasts that the Arts Council, "far from taking from the arts, is in fact restoring many millions of pounds to it". The *Arts Council News* version of that promise was that "net financial savings from restructuring ... should free up as least £2m per year for frontline arts activity".

When set against the £28.5m the arts funding system spent on staff salaries, agency staff, professional fees (consultants) and external assessment (more consultants) in 1997/98, that hardly seems as radical or as generous as Peter Hewitt would like us to believe.

CHARLES MORGAN
Wotton-under-Edge,
Gloucestershire

Koestler assault

Sir: The gleeful assault in the press on the now defenceless Arthur Koestler ironically has all the characteristics of the show trials he did so much to expose ("Storm as Raphael defends rapist Koestler", 23 February).

Mr Raphael's argument, in *Prospect*, is that it would be imbalanced to allow certain alleged sexual acts completely to eclipse Koestler's life work: the accusations against Koestler are serious, but they do not negate him. Koestler will long be valued for his devastating description of the twisted mentality and physical brutality of Soviet communism.

We are all complex beings, striving to balance conflicting tensions within us, and sometimes we behave badly – even those of us who have not undergone the kind of extreme mental suffering that Koestler did.

The Independent has recently mocked America for a tawdry obsession with people's sex lives; what a shame that it now collaborates in the reduction of Arthur Koestler's life and work to a sex scandal.

MARTIN BUCKLEY
London W11

Sir: So Frederic Raphael claims that Jill Craigie "may have been excited by the risks" of being with Arthur Koestler, who raped her – when Ms Craigie asserts quite the contrary.

Is Raphael now a spokesperson for raped women? His arrogance seems to know no bounds.

"The abuse of women was (if it is not still) a certificate of virility in many great men. If we are to dispraise famous men, who is to be spared?" The answer, Mr Raphael, is none.

Professor JUNE PURVIS
School of Social and Historical Studies
University of Portsmouth

Nasty pleasures

Sir: Terence Blacker's perceptive "It's brutal, it's selfish, it's sex today" (Review, 23 February) provided a timely analysis of the increasingly obsessive preoccupation by TV drama makers to challenge and cross all the boundaries of sexual behaviour, both heterosexual and homosexual.

Channel 4's "Queer as Folk" on 23 February was a case in point. The first of an eight-part drama on the lives and loves of three homosexual men, it starts with a 29-year-old man picking up a boy of 15 – itself a criminal offence. What follows has been described as the most graphic sex scenes shown on TV. I believe that this and several other current drama series undermine the values that are vital for the health and strengthening of our society.

Sex is a beautiful but fragile gift from God. Its exploitation or trivialisation often leads to emptiness and disillusionment. But that, of course, is rarely admitted and explored. To do so would explode the fantasy. Integrity and truth so easily become expendable.

Terence Blacker is right ... "somewhere along the line something has changed and the age-old search for pleasure has turned nasty".

+JOHN CHELMSFORD
Margaretting,
Essex

Wanting it all

Sir: Part of the reason for increased depression is that we have increased expectations of happiness and seem to have forgotten that sadness, misery even, is a normal part of being human ("Stressed out, blissed out", 25 February).

The selfishness promoted during the 1980s made us more acquisitive, more jealous of those who have, and more likely to feel like failures if we aren't succeeding in having it all. There is more pressure on men to work all hours, to earn and keep on earning. There is more pressure on women to work all hours and earn, either to support their families single-handedly or to ensure that the family income is enough to pay the mortgage – and yet there is widespread job insecurity. Where do children fit in in all this? They don't – they are squeezed out.

HEIDI BRADSHAW
Cambridge

Sir: Deborah Orr asked whether tinkering with brain chemistry would be likely to fix the problems created by a society that promotes stress and depression.

Surely the point of altering brain chemistry is to ensure that people are less likely to want to change society when simply taking a pill can ease away all the pain.

J ABRAHAMS
Sheffield

IN BRIEF

Sir: The BMA warns that any surgeon amputating a woman's normal breasts for non-therapeutic reasons could be in breach of his ethical duty – even with the woman's consent ("Cancer fear drives woman to have breasts removed", 23 February).

But the BMA does not oppose (and refuses to comment on the ethics of) the non-therapeutic amputation of a boy's normal foreskin – even without the child's consent.

ROGER SPENCE
Dorchester, Oxford

Sir: H J Hall asks where the English language is going (letter, 25 February) when "maximum weight" is replaced with "maximum technical permissible laden mass". To put it simply, "it's the physics, stupid". Mass is the correct term for what is colloquially known as weight; the additional words act to define the state more exactly.

S N TRAVIS
Sale, Greater Manchester

Sir: Robert Fisk claims that Turkey and Israel are sharing information against Iraq, Iran and Syria ("Jerusalem draws in the Turks to spy on its foes", 24 February). I do not know if that is true, but I do think that it is a good thing and anyone in his right mind should support it.

After all, those three countries are all on the US list of countries supporting terrorism.

KERIM URAS
London SW15

Sir: Your article "My doctors are too informal" (Dilemmas, 25 February) reminded me of an elderly parishioner in a friend's parish who much objected to being addressed by the new (and eager-to-be-friendly) vicar as anything but "Mrs".

She said: "I spent years in service being told, 'Vera, do this' or 'Vera, do that', and it's nice to have some respect at my age."

THE REV G J WRAYFORD
Minehead,
Somerset

The dinner party

Continued from front page

of secular religion.

Susie: That's going too far. It's more a question of containing.

Tim: Containing what?

Susie: All sorts of things – passion, conflict, difficulties.

Tim: Doesn't it also have an element of seeking spiritual elevation?

Susie: No, I don't think so. I think it's a response to distress.

Brix: I take so many food supplements: echinacea to keep my immune system happy; I take giant multivitamins and minerals and stuff, sometimes with added ginseng; and I take zinc in the morning and evening, if I remember. I also take chlorella, a seaweed extract.

Jane: Oh yeah, I take that.

Brix: And I take St John's wort as a natural antidepressant, then I take acidophilus.

Tim: Acidophilus?

Brix: It's happy bacteria.

Tim: As opposed to miserable bacteria?

Brix: It's about keeping your system happy if you eat the wrong thing.

Susie: If you were eating a very limited diet, it's not such a terrible thing to be ingesting all those supplements, but why aren't you ingesting them as food?

Tim: Jane, do you do supplements?

Jane: I do take chlorella. It's an alga, it's like spirulina.

Brix: I also have chromium drops.

Tim: What's that all about?

Jane: Chromium is the only one that really matters.

Tim: This sounds like total rubbish.

Jane: I'm sure it is rubbish... Chromium polymate is supposed to boost your metabolism.

Brix: It also stops craving for starch.

Susie: What you mean is, it binds with the starch molecules that are in there already.

Jane: There was this natural slimming pill in the States that loads of people lost lots of weight with, and then it proved to produce heart attacks. Suddenly people were dropping like flies, and they banned it. I'm pretty sure chromium is not that great. I know that when I've taken too much, I get very speedy. When I've taken it without food, I feel terrible. But I take it every day.

Tim: Food obsession also acts as a kind of social connector.

Jane: It's a bonding.

Susie: It's a way of conversing about other things. Instead of saying "I feel terrible", or "Get a grip", you say, "you should take chromium"...

Tim: I don't know any men who take food supplements. I don't know any men who think food affects their mood.

Jane: Every man I've ever known is in a foul mood when they're hungry.

Tim: Sure. But this is a whole culture we're talking about. There's also this kind of underground-knowledge aspect. Have you ever been given a secret diet smuggled out of a hospital?

Brix: Yes.

Jane: Yes, the three-day hot dog, ice-cream, beetroot one.

Brix: There's the heart-attack one.

Jane: Is that the vegetable soup?

Brix: Yes! How many times did I do that?

Jane: No I couldn't, I couldn't...

Tim: You know about this then?

Brix: Definitely. I did it for a week. Shocking – it's gross. You make a soup, you make a cauldron, it's cabbage and carrots and –

Jane: You end up using every pan in your house.

Brix: I have a giant vat. This is the fat-burning soup.

Jane: The idea is, the more you eat the more you lose.

Brix: You have to stuff your face with vegetables – like, you're gagging. This one guarantees losing between 10 and 17 pounds in a week!

Susie: Anyone who's ever been on one of these crazy diets knows that you may lose some but then, the week after, you put it back on again and more.

Tim: All the evidence suggests that dieting simply does not work. That everyone puts it back on.

Jane: It doesn't work. We all know that. Of course it doesn't work.

Tim: Then, why the hell? why don't...?

Jane: We're not dieting. We have specific eating habits. We just have a way of...

Susie: You have food-management procedures?

Jane and Brix: Yeah, exactly.



THE INDEPENDENT

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Britain's small theatres deserve better than this

THEY MOAN that they are short of money; the Government says that they have far more funds available than their predecessors; and the employees find themselves overworked, underfunded and undervalued.

What are we talking of here: teachers? nurses? firemen perhaps? No, in this case the latest complainants are the theatres. It is an indication of the ambivalent attitude the English (not the Scots or the Welsh or the Irish, it should be noted) have to the arts that the complaints, in these pages, of so distinguished a director as Sir Peter Hall and the host of small theatre directors who have backed him are immediately dismissed, in the words of Lord Bragg in *The Independent* yesterday, as "all but scandalous".

When our actors, scriptwriters and directors win Hollywood awards, they are fêted as national treasures. When they demand more money for their trade, they are described as "whingeing luvvies". Only last month, one of the opera world's most highly regarded opera directors was reduced to apologising for stating that state subsidy had a role to play in nurturing public art.

State subsidy, indeed, is not a productive form of activity for governments, certainly not as developed under previous Labour governments, before our post-Thatcherite New Labour. Too often it has been used to prop up ailing industries and, more especially, artificially to increase employment in sensitive parliamentary constituencies. As a means of bucking the market trend, it never works.

But the theatre is only an industry in the most partial sense – and a most successful British one, it should be said, given the earnings that it generates in tourism. It is also a cultural part of life, a means of enriching lives and commenting upon them. In that sense it is not a business, but part of education. And a part that is ever more desperately needed as the Government narrows its definition of formal education to the three Rs and downgrades art. This Government knows that. Indeed Labour came in with the deliberately cultivated image, and a deliberately cultivated group of supporters from the arts, of being art-friendly. And – its critics should accept this – it has made more state funds available than ever before. Not only has the overall Arts Council grant gone up – an increase of £125m in three years – but the money being made available through the lottery, now mercifully freed from its concentration on buildings rather than people, has added tens of millions more.

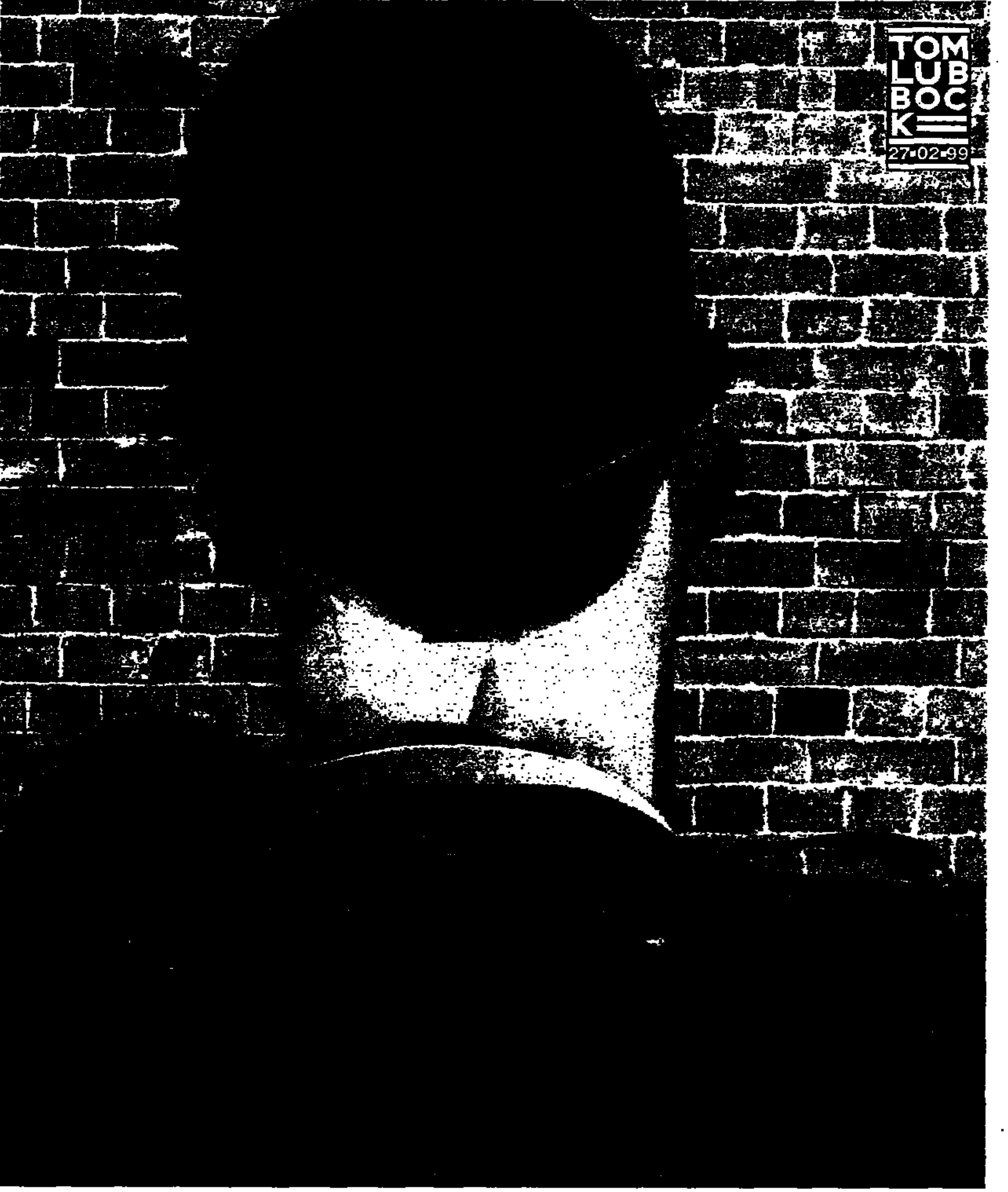
Yet speak to any theatre manager, or talk privately to almost any of the great and the good among directors, and you will get the same story: of theatres all over the country, who have struggled valiantly for years, finally going under as their applications for further grants are turned down. Whenever there is a gap between anecdotal complaint on the ground and government denial that there is anything wrong, it is a safe bet that the anecdotal evidence tells the true story. Whatever the arguments about the size of the total pot available, there's clearly a serious problem about funding the number of small organisations seeking assistance. Far from receiving more money, the majority of them have received no increase in funding at all – an effective cut in real terms. The fact that the Arts Council can't see it confirms what many in the theatre business suspect. In the end, the Council wants to concentrate its funds on the big, prestigious companies and is content to throw the rest to the less-than-gentle mercies of the regional arts-funding structure that is to be established.

That is wrong in strategy, and wrong in practice. The great companies should have help, but not at the expense of the small. In the arts more than any other field, a thousand flowers should be encouraged to bloom. It is the small who go to schools and tour their areas. And it is the local theatres who experiment.

It is also these companies that will suffer most from the move being encouraged from European-style state subsidy to American-style corporate and individual support. Corporate sponsors rarely favour the unknown, still less the daring. Private sponsorship in Britain has not made up for state grants and, in the case of most theatres, is never likely to do so. Given that, we have to ask whether the Arts Council is any longer the right organisation to formulate strategy and assess grants.

Founded originally as a means of separating politics from the arts, and set up as a spokesman for the arts business, it has seemed unable to cope with the job of serving the arts on the one hand, and a radical new government policy stressing access and education on the other. More, its status as an arm's-length quango, which might have been its strength, is now its weakness. It has little accountability in public, makes its decisions in secret and seems to be subject to no questioning in its planning. Its present theatre policy is the product not of a strategy but of a curious amalgam of obsession with efficiency, coupled with last-minute concessions to big companies with public clout, such as the RSC.

Sir Peter Hall's alternative Arts Council may be wishful thinking. But he is surely right that the curtain should come down on the Arts Council. Time to bring on a new show.



No case for more aid for Longbridge

WE DO not have to look very far for an example of the worst way to spend taxpayers' money, one that has yielded the poorest return in the history of public expenditure. It is a long-running drama, set in an old factory haunted by the accumulated spirits of past motor magnates, defunct politicians and ugly cars. It has claimed many. It may be about to claim another. The spirit of Labour governments past is stalking Stephen Byers, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

He is thinking of paying BMW, the owner of Rover, a subsidy of perhaps £100m to keep the Longbridge works in Birmingham open and "save" jobs. In return, BMW will revamp the facility and develop new models, and productivity will improve.

It sounds plausible enough. But only for those with memories as short as a Mini. Those with a better sense of economic history will recall the formation in 1968 of the proud British Leyland Motor Corporation (ancestor of today's Rover Group), a combine that was designed to take on the world's car giants. A modest subsidy was provided, to assist the reconstruction. Seven years later the firm was bust and in state ownership. In the Seventies and Eighties managements blackmailed governments of both parties into paying huge amounts of aid. Sir Michael Edwardes even managed to squeeze a billion or two out of Mrs Thatcher.

The same arguments were used over and over again: vast damage to the regional economy and a devastating effect on the balance of trade. Ministers always caved in and asked for "improvements in productivity" in return, as Mr Byers, ominously, did in Parliament last week. A rough estimate of the total cost of the state's operating subsidies plus regional aid grants plus the "sweeteners" paid to offload the firm into the private sector would top £20bn at today's prices – funds that could have been put into education or left in the pockets of more successful firms.

And what did the taxpayers get for their money? Generation after generation of "make-or-break" models that were, mostly, indifferently designed and made, and commanded a smaller and smaller share of the market at home and abroad. British Leyland started with 40 per cent of the home market; today Rover has about 6 per cent. Co-operation with Honda and BMW failed to solve the group's fundamental problems and, in particular, the volume side of the business, centred on Longbridge.

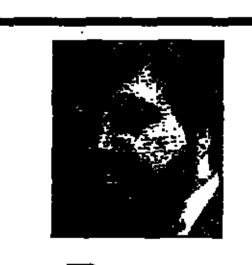
When so much effort and so much money have been poured in over three decades, and with so little success, it is time to think more radically.

The hard truth is that the world is awash with car plants. The entire US auto industry could be shut down and there would still be too much capacity. It is a hard truth and it implies the hardest of choices for Mr Byers.

He should be the first minister in decades to say "no" to the threats. He may find that the ghosts haunting Longbridge are not so frightening. He may find that calling BMW's bluff will not, in fact, result in total closure. He may even find that a stronger declaration in favour of joining the euro might have as powerful an effect as a large cheque signed by the Paymaster General.

However, if Longbridge does shrink or close, there are many small British firms involved in components and design which are growing. These firms don't seek or need subsidies. They have the surest chance of survival. Mr Byers should design New Labour's policies for them, and exorcise those ghosts.

The man of peace known as the Reverend Ian Paisley



DAVID McKITTRICK

The old warhorse is preparing for government. His men are among those who love Stormont most

I'VE BEEN watching the Reverend Ian Paisley for more than 20 years. It has been impossible not to: he is the biggest personality in Northern Ireland and generally the most politically destructive. He has vanquished many opponents and helped bring down many attempted settlements. If ever they gave out a lifetime achievement award for wrecking, it's a fair bet that he would be proudly placing it on his well-appointed east Belfast mantelpiece.

At first sight his Democratic Unionist Party is an unchanging group of diehards for whom politics is simply a way of fighting a religious war by other means, the party of straightforward anti-Catholicism and anti-Nationalism. But in fact it has undergone a sea change to become one of the most fascinating elements in the Belfast political equation and, potentially, one of the most crucial. Mr Paisley has led the opposition to the Good Friday accord, fighting last year's referendum campaign on an uncompromising "smash the Good Friday agreement" ticket.

In the assembly chamber, where his party holds 20 of the 108 seats, DUP members engage in hand-to-hand rhetoric, sometimes with Sinn Fein but most often with David Trimble's pro-agreement Ulster Unionists. Mr Paisley routinely attacks Mr Trimble's "treachery and betrayal".

Yet these assembly sessions can give a misleading impression of the underlying state of what is really going on politically, and of the health of the peace process. Unionism is certainly divided, as was shown in last week's vote when Unionist members voted 29 for and 29 against an important motion. But, with hardly an exception, unionist members adore the Stormont assembly. Unionist members of all factions are to be seen striding officiously through its marbled and gilded corridors, *Hansards* and sheaves of important-looking papers tucked under their arms.

Some of the more senior sweep ostentatiously through the corridors trailing aides, officials, press officers and bodyguards, a retinue designed to convey that they are people of influence and consequence. Many of the 108 members are, in other words, revelling in the trappings of power.

John Hume and the SDLP have been working towards something like this for many years, knowing in their bones that only an institution that could command cross-community support has any chance of taking root. This new Stormont is the natural result of their belief, held over the decades, that nationalist and Unionist must share power.

Sinn Fein came to the idea much later, having first had to swallow the concept of going into a building that, for decades, they had regarded as a symbol of Protestant supremacy and repression. Although they are among the least affected by the marble and the gilt, they still see it all as a valuable vehicle for pursuing their goals.

David Trimble's Unionists have settled in wonderfully, looking forward to the day when Westminster devolves real power to the new institution. The last quarter of a century has not been easy for Unionists as they have watched power slip away from their tradition, seen influence gained by John Hume and Gerry Adams and watched with trepidation the rise of Anglo-Irishry.

For them the assembly offers a chance to get a Unionist handle on things, an opportunity to get back into the game, an opening to regain some control of their own destiny. While it is not the ideal system for them, it nonetheless offers them access to the levers of power.

And the DUP, which fought so hard against all this, will also get a share of that power, for the arithmetical formula for doling out executive seats dictates that the party will have two places on the executive. Mr Paisley may be against the whole thing in principle, but in practice he will certainly take those seats.

The old warhorse is, in other words, preparing for government. In the meantime it is obvious that his men are among those who love Stormont most, who have the highest spring in their step as they pass proudly through its portals. They most love its grandiose charms, and they least want to lose it. "They treat this place like a country club," said one opponent.

Some will accuse the old man of hypocrisy in all this; others will figure that he has little choice but to go along with the new realpolitik imposed by the Good Friday agreement, a document whose craft and subtlety is gradually being revealed.

The Paisleyite desire to stay in the assembly and to get into government is going to be of crucial political importance, for it shows the difference between appearance and reality. However things may seem on the surface, David Trimble is not struggling to preserve the assembly from Paisley's attempts to destroy it; rather, both want to keep it going.

Furthermore, both unionist leaders probably believe that at some stage in the next few months the issue of arms decommissioning will be resolved one way or another, and that Sinn Fein will then take its seats in the executive. This will not deter Mr Paisley from taking his seats; he put up a great fight against the whole thing, but now he is prepared to lie back and think of Ulster.

Paisleyism has always reflected a schizophrenia within Unionism. At one level it is authoritarian and unforgiving of dissidents, as seen in its emphasis on law and order and maximum punishment for those who break the rules. On another level it embodies the politics of dissent, as is demonstrated by all those Paisleyite protests over the years.

Although these two instincts have often collided, the new executive will provide a cabinet that his men can simultaneously join and denounce. This may well be something close to Paisleyite heaven.

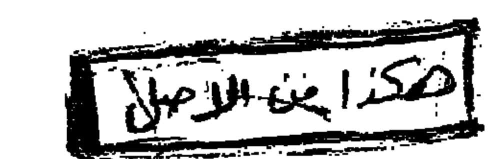
Last year's referendum on the Good Friday agreement recorded a 71 per cent endorsement of the accord, which meant that just over half of the Unionists approved of it. Although some have since argued that some Unionist support has ebbed away, it is in fact more likely that tacit acceptance of the agreement has increased.

At the political level, this is partly because the lure of office and status is so strong; at grass-roots level it is largely due to the time-honoured Presbyterian instinct to accept the will of the majority.

But there is also something deeper going on here. Whatever temptations were on offer, Paisley and his people would not be in such a participatory mood if they really believed that this agreement was trundling them inexorably towards a united Ireland.

There are many things he and his supporters would want to see changed in the Good Friday agreement; their attempts to alter it will probably form much of the stuff of politics in the years ahead. The bottom line, though, is that they do not fear the accord and are not in the business of wrecking it. The net effect is a strong Protestant consensus that the assembly should survive.

None of this means that the decommissioning deadlock will easily be resolved, and none of it provides a cast-iron guarantee that the peace process will remain on track. But it does mean that, despite all past setbacks and future hurdles, there are powerful and not always obvious factors that mean that survival is much more likely than collapse. Welcome to the peace process, Mr Paisley.



MONITOR

ALL THE NEWS OF THE WORLD

The Lawrence report • Britain and the euro • 'Queer as Folk' • Kosovo peace talks • The trial of Ocalan

BRITAIN AND THE EURO

Views on Tony Blair's announcement of the 'changeover' plan should Britain decide to join the euro

THE SUN

WHAT PRICE the euro? Too high at £10bn, say small and medium businesses. They don't want to pay that to make computers euro-compliant when we may never join. These are firms creating jobs and we don't want them squeezed out by "might-be" expenses. Not many trade direct with Europe. So who will be delighted with Tony Blair's growing devotion to the euro? Only giant multinationals who are shedding jobs and hope trading in euros cuts costs further.

Mr Blair will talk tough about tax and welfare opt-outs. History tells a different story. Whatever Europe wants, Europe gets... eventually.

THE MIRROR

MR BLAIR is not a European fanatic. He wants only one thing – to do what is best for Britain. "The national interest will always come first," he said yesterday. But it is not in the national interest to refuse to have anything to do with the euro. Or to ignore the preparations needed before it can be introduced. The final say will be with the people in a referendum.

But Mr Blair would be failing in his duty if he did not insist that we got ready for the single currency. It will be up to the people to decide this country's destiny. The Prime Minister is simply pointing them in the right direction.

DAILY RECORD

HE DIDN'T say Yes and he didn't say No. Tony Blair said Maybe. He really meant it to sound like Probably. But everyone is certain he said Definitely. Confused? Aren't we all? The Prime Minister is a gambler. Staking his euros on Britain's entry into the common currency could be his most dangerous political punt of all. He is putting his own personal charisma and voter-appeal on the line by asking the still-sceptical British electorate to follow him into Europe and is betting the Government's future by turning the next general election into a single-issue campaign – Europe.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

IN HIS long statement to the Commons, Tony Blair failed to come up with a single good reason why such a plan to take us into the single currency is necessary at this stage. His arguments would seem to imply that, at the moment, Europe is unfit for us. Logic, however, has never been Mr Blair's strongest suit. What concerns him is how to swing a referendum that could make or break his premiership. Mr Blair is hoping to edge us, unresisting, in the direction of the euro until it is too late to turn back. It is not too early to resist him.

THE TIMES

THE PM has fired the starting gun for his attempt to take Britain into monetary union. The euro, he says, is "a reality"; Britain must prepare to be part of it. Mr Blair has now given the lobbyists for EMU the signal they have long demanded, starting a process designed to convince voters that entry is a foregone conclusion.

Inevitability is one of the most seductive mantras of European politics. To go with the flow is the greatest desire of European politicians. To be left out of a seemingly inevitable European unification is almost the greatest fear of this modern British Prime Minister.

EVENING STANDARD

ONCE THE storm has subsided after the words from the Prime Minister, it will be recognised that he has merely said openly what he has always been known to believe in private. The timing of a British move remains uncertain and it is still much too early to be sure how the euro's fortunes will progress. Yet there are already signs of growing alarm in the City about the future of British business outside the euro.

If this sentiment grows, it will greatly assist Mr Blair. He will be able to proclaim that he is the champion of reality against the dinosaurs of nationalism. In any event, it is welcome that today he is making plain his aspirations.

The conscience of a nation



THE LAWRENCE REPORT

Verdicts on the publication of Sir William Macpherson's report into the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence

DAILY MAIL

THE DANGER is that Sir William, in his determination to root out racism, may be making the politically correct mistakes which the Americans are now trying to undo. He seems to have forgotten that Britain remains a fundamentally decent country. Welcome though much of the report may be, it would do no service to Stephen's memory if Britain fell into the grip of racial McCarthyism. That would be the ultimate triumph for the smirking savages who, let it never be forgotten, murdered this decent young man and are still walking free in the streets of London.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

BY SAYING that all white-dominated public institutions are likely to be racist, Straw has played into the hands of those who wish to undermine our respect for our own society. It encourages ethnic minorities to cultivate a greater sense of grievance and breeds in the white majority a resentment that it is considered guilty unless proved innocent.

Reports such as these are supposed to heal wounds. This one is likely to open new ones. How far we have come from the right source of outrage in this – the fact that an innocent young man was murdered and his killers never caught.

THE MIRROR

THE REPORT is not just about the police, though. It is a challenge to us all. To get rid of racism in our workplaces, communities and homes. Until there is no prejudice in the minds of decent people, we will not stop the sickness that led to the butchery of Stephen Lawrence.

THE TIMES

THE POLICE'S failings are not best understood when viewed solely through the prism of race. Society as a whole has been ill-served by the police service's failure to reform its practices. Recruitment from ethnic minorities has been woeful, but it is also worth noting that recruitment of talented graduates from every background has been remarkably poor. The police have failed to reflect a changing society. It should never be forgotten that this inquiry was made necessary by the police's failure to apprehend murderous criminals. Reform must concentrate on enhancing the operational effectiveness of the police rather than seeking to conciliate every interest group with a grievance.

THE GUARDIAN

SIR PAUL has a long and public record of fighting racism within his force, and also his courage in tackling police corruption – often in the face of considerable hostility from his own officers. His resignation would have had a certain symbolic cleanness about it. But if he is to stay, he must surely realise that yesterday's report was a beginning, not an end. In the 10 months he has left, he has much to prove. All Macpherson's work will have been wasted unless it inspires efforts by the police to win the confidence of the black community which it patently lacks at the moment. That fight should start today and, yes, the buck really does stop with Sir Paul.

THE EXPRESS

ONLY ONCE we all accept responsibility will change be achieved. This is not to excuse the police. Overtly corrupt and racist officers must be sacked. Their forces know who they are. Unwitting racism needs rooting out and undermining, through education and penalties, too, if necessary. And then the police must use existing race laws – and they are tough – to fulfil their duty to protect ethnic minorities as well as white people.

THE WEST MIDLANDS EXPRESS & STAR

SOCIETY AS a whole is not to blame for the Lawrence tragedy. The transformation of Britain into a multicultural society has been one of the unsung successes of our century.

Sadly there are a few race-hate gangs and a few racist or incompetent police officers. It was Stephen Lawrence's tragedy to fall among both.

The best memorial to Stephen Lawrence would be a freer and more tolerant society, not a sweeping away of ancient liberties. We have enough problems with bent police without recruiting Thought Police.

FINANCIAL TIMES

OVERALL, THE Macpherson report has created an opportunity for a major overhaul of an institution where a combination of poor management and complacency has allowed racism and corruption to persist. The duty of a government that declares itself "modernising" is to move beyond the damning specifics of this report and radically reshape the way the nation's police services are run.

'QUEER AS FOLK'

Reviews of the controversial new Channel 4 drama series centred around the lives of three homosexual men

THE PINK PAPER

WHAT'S UNEXPECTED about the programme is the sheer strength of the writing, the depth of the characters, the fact that *Queer as Folk* shows gay men caught with their trousers down – a warts-and-all gay drama with the emphasis firmly on the drama. Shocking? Yes, but shocking because it's normal, everyday. Being gay is not the drama here, it's the starting-point. And it's about time that was shown on the box. *(Toby Sawyer)*



THE MIRROR

CALL ME old-fashioned but I think sex is best carried out in private between two consulting adults of the opposite sex. It appears to be something of a rarity these days. On television, people are at it all over the place with all sorts. If the opening episode of *Queer as Folk* was anything to go by, the bare bum count is heading for an all-time record. *(Tony Purnell)*

DAILY MAIL

QUEER AS FOLK proves that we need censorship. Year by year, the boundaries of what is deemed permissible are pushed wider and wider apart. Certainly we shouldn't be at liberty to watch naked actors having relentless homosexual sex. Any nation which allows this without any voices raised in dissent is lacking in both wisdom and self-respect. It's hell-bent on destruction. *(Lynda Lee Potter)*

THE TIMES

IF IT didn't have the novelty of gay sex, would anyone have made a fuss about it? Or got excited about it in a positive way, rather than because of its depiction of under-age man-boy sex? Its cynicism could just be a stab at chic metropolitan knowingness, but you can imagine it leaving a nasty taste in many viewers' mouths.

EVENING STANDARD

SMART, FUNNY, beautifully acted and squelchingly explicit, this drama leaves us in no doubt as to what gay men do to each other. What it may do, though, is present a humane, challenging picture of a section of our society in which they may, at long last, recognise themselves without wincing. Is this the end of television as we know it? I do hope so. *(Allison Pearson)*

KOSOVO PEACE TALKS

The world press considers the outcome of the Kosovan talks in Rambouillet

CHINA DAILY

FOR PEACE-LOVING people, the Rambouillet deal has not defused the possibility of war in the long-standing tinder-box. We urge the parties concerned to show genuine sincerity when striving for a peaceful political resolution of the crisis. A peaceful, just and reasonable resolution to the Kosovo crisis relies eventually on the parties involved in Yugoslavia.

DAWN
Pakistan

THE SITUATION is quite critical now. All the parties involved in the Balkans have failed to put up a united front. The contact group will hopefully succeed in bringing Milosevic to see reason and agree to the stationing of a peace force in Kosovo. This will be for an interim period and, in the extraordinary circumstances which prevail, this move can hardly be interpreted as an infringement of Serbian sovereignty.

NATIONAL POST
Canada

BY BLOCKING the Kosovar delegation from accepting a reasonable settlement which would have forced the Serbs on to the defensive, the KLA has given Milosevic room to manoeuvre. He now has until the talks reconvene to eradicate the KLA in order to present a *fait accompli* to Nato: no KLA, no Kosovo problem, no negotiations.

LE MONDE
France

RAMBOUILLET WASN'T a failure. It's a beginning. But time is of the essence. Back in the Balkans, fighting has recommenced. We know only too well the price a civilian population pays when at the mercy of the Serbian forces.

THE TRIAL OF OCALAN

Opinion on the arrest and forthcoming trial of the Kurdish Workers Party leader, Abdullah Ocalan

MILLIYET
Turkey

EUROPEANS, IN a single voice, have launched a campaign against the Turkish justice system that will try Ocalan, demanding a "fair trial". In the EU Foreign Ministers' statement there was no reference to the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK). It denounced terrorism but did not mention how Greece has supported terrorism. On the other hand, it made recommendations as to how Ocalan should be tried and stressed the need for a "political solution". Ankara originally expected the EU's attitude to be different. Since the EU Foreign Ministers' Council issued its statement, Ankara has raised its voice against its European friends.

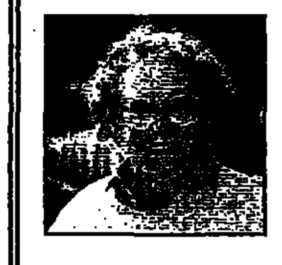
WASHINGTON POST
US

THE EARLY accounts of Mr Ocalan in captivity have turned up the heat under Greek-Turkish relations. The Turks are angry, but not out of line, in demanding that Athens answer to the European Union for any violation of Greece's counter-terrorist obligations. It would be good to know that the citizens of Greece were making a similar demand on their own government.

TURKISH DAILY NEWS

EVERYTHING IN connection with Ocalan should be carried out in the open within the limits of providing proper security for him, so that we do not give the PKK and its foreign sympathisers any grist for the propaganda mill. That is the only way to overcome the inevitable disinformation campaign that the PKK has already initiated. We should not give the impression that the legal process is a military affair, but that it is the civilian administration that will try him and prosecute him.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK



"I was mistaken for a prostitute once in the last war. When a GI asked me what I charged, I said, 'Well, dear, what do your mother and sisters normally ask for?'"
Dame Thora Hird, actress (above)

"I am told there is a new, tough generation known phonetically as Bananas meaning Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything."
The Prince of Wales

"I am a rebel against strictness and also against logic."
Ken Dodd, comedian

"'Axed' is a negative word. This is a positive, forward move."
The spokesperson for the soon to be discontinued 'Noel's House Party'

"The best way to end a canteen culture is to spend more time outside the canteen."
Chris Mullin, Labour MP

"I am considered attractive by some people and I've been completely ignored by others, so I know that I am somewhere in the middle."
Colin Firth, actor

THE VIEWS OF THE WORLD

LIANHE ZAOBAO
Singapore

PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS
US

DAILY STAR
Lebanon

THE ECONOMIST
UK

CARTOONISTS & WRITERS SYNDICATE

MISCELLANEOUS

Stories from around the world

THE NORWAY POST

WE'VE EXPERIENCED our first Viagra-related death in Norway. A Norwegian man aged 65 died after using the medication. The man died suddenly of heart failure and hadn't been using any other medication.

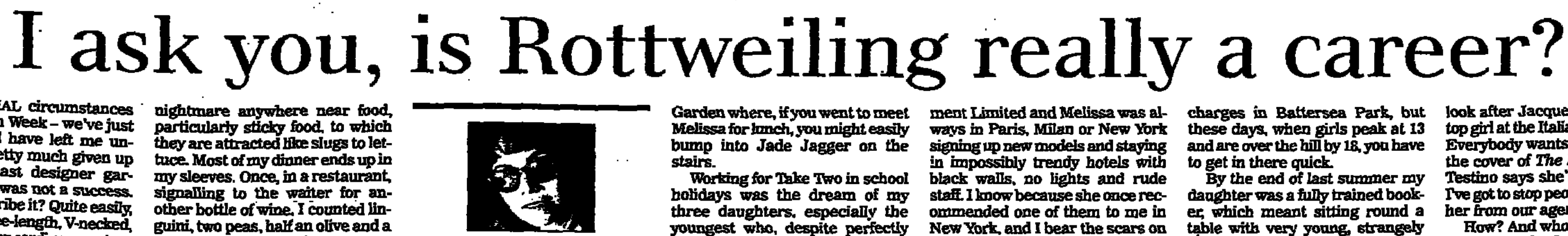
He had received Viagra from his general practitioner, and is believed to have followed the safety instructions. Apparently approximately 20 out of 1 million Viagra-free acts of intercourse end in death anyway.

So the health department maintains that "Viagra enables a man to do something that he has not done for a long time. That is why we have to consider all the circumstances in a case like this, before we make a parallel between the death and [the taking of] Viagra."

THE STRAITS TIMES
Singapore

A WEBSITE set up by the government to encourage Malaysians to express love for their country has been used by critics to insult national leaders. Those who wrote in used fictitious names. The website was meant to allow Malaysians to express love for the country. However, a large percentage of those who expressed feelings used vulgar words. When asked how much longer the website would be maintained a minister quipped: "Until they have finished cursing."

RESEARCH BY SALLY CHATTERTON



I ask you, is Rottweiling really a career?

SUE ARNOLD

My daughter's been trained to hang around playgrounds looking for the future Kate Moss

UNDER NORMAL circumstances British Fashion Week – we've just had it – would have left me unmoved. I've pretty much given up fashion. The last designer garment I bought was not a success. How can I describe it? Quite easily, in fact: it's a knee-length, V-necked, dark grey tubular cardigan, austere to the point of astringency save in one respect. Instead of cuffs it has long, shaggy, drooping woollen tendrils variously knotted, looped and frayed, sprouting at each wrist. "An amusing little detail, typical of this particular designer," said the shop assistant knowingly as she disentangled one of my fronds from her earring with a bitter expression.

And amusing they probably are when I make expansive Gallic gestures and my woolly toggles bounce waywardly at will. But they're a nightmare anywhere near food, particularly sticky food, to which they are attracted like slugs to lettuce. Most of my dinner ends up in my sleeves. Once, in a restaurant, signalling to the waiter for another bottle of wine, I counted linguini, two peas, half an olive and a toothpick embedded most unamusingly in my cuff.

But back to fashion week which this year did not pass unnoticed because, like it or not, I have become unwittingly involved in the glossy world of supermodels. Throw another log on the fire, if you like; this is a long story. I have this friend called Melissa who, when all my other friends were carving out important careers in the media, the City and Tupperware, started her own model agency, called Take Two, which the rest of us, working for Thompson Regional Newspapers, Coopers & Lybrand and Tupperware, thought terribly trendy. So was her office in Covent Garden where, if you went to meet Melissa for lunch, you might easily bump into Jade Jagger on the stairs.

Working for Take Two in school holidays was the dream of my three daughters, especially the youngest who, despite perfectly respectable grades in A-level theology, classical civilisation and English literature, said she would rather be a booker at Melissa's than go to university. A booker? It sounded vaguely erudite. Maybe you needed three A-levels to be a booker. Had I had the opportunity to sit down and discuss my daughter's future at length with Melissa, things might have been different; but alas, Melissa was never around. Trendy Take Two had metamorphosed into the far more serious and forbidding Take Two Management Limited and Melissa was always in Paris, Milan or New York signing up new models and staying in impossibly trendy hotels with black walls, no lights and rude staff. I know because she once recommended one of them to me in New York, and I bear the scars on my chins and the bruises on my *amour propre* to this day.

What I did learn from the fledgeling booker was that you don't get to book overnight. You have to be trained. First, you have to learn to scout. This, as far as I can make out, entails hanging around school playgrounds at half past three looking for the future Kate Moss. The goods, as we all know, are getting younger. In the old days, Melissa would sign up Welsh nannies and Polish au pair girls she'd spotted making sandcastles with their charges in Battersea Park, but these days, when girls peak at 13 and are over the hill by 18, you have to get in there quick.

By the end of last summer my daughter was a fully trained booker, which meant sitting round a table with very young, strangely dressed people, shouting into the telephone about options, go-sees, castings and outs. Stranger still were the models themselves: wasted and never, to my mind, wearing enough warm clothes. "They've got attitude, that's what counts," explained Melissa.

There were the usual crises last week. Three models got food poisoning at a fast-food noodle bar in Soho and couldn't make the knitwear show at the Natural History Museum. "Mum, Melissa is sending me to Milan next week to look after Jacquetta Wheeler, our top girl at the Italian fashion shows. Everybody wants her. She was on the cover of *The Face*, and Mario Testino says she's the face of '99. I've got to stop people trying to steal her from our agency."

How? And who's Mario Testino anyway? "Why don't you go over to Milan for the day and see how it all works," suggested Melissa. "You'd be very proud of your daughter. She's a regular Rottweiler."

But is Rottweiling really a career? Something inside me still wishes she were studying Jane Austin at Warwick University under the beady eyes of Professor Germaine Greer, who, I bet you anything, was not at the knitwear collection at the Natural History Museum. I wonder if it featured any slug-and-lettuce cardigans.

THE SATURDAY PROFILE

ANNA WINTOUR, EDITOR OF AMERICAN 'VOGUE'

The lion in Wintour

IMAGINE THIS scene. You work for American *Vogue*. You are not important, but you want to be at some point. One day you return to the Condé Nast building on Madison Avenue. You've been out and about, interviewing, and are lugging loads of papers. You enter the lift and press floor 13. It is your unlucky day.

Someone very slim and beautiful gets into the lift. She is Anna Wintour. She is your editor – or editor-in-chief to be precise, which, in fact, she prides herself in being. Nor is she just any old editor-in-chief but the most powerful woman in the entire world of fashion. She is also friends – yes, friends – with the likes of Hillary Clinton. Even the company chairman, Si Newhouse, can only gush. "Anna Wintour is the greatest *Vogue* editor of them all," he says. Suddenly, you realise that you are about to be stuck in the lift for 13 floors with an icon who also happens to be your boss.

She is wearing red shoes. At this moment you drop all your papers. You bend down to collect them, ferreting round the fiery Manolo Blahnik stilettos. The shoes do not move. The 13th floor arrives and you hear a voice from on high. "Oh *do* get your act together," it says. And then, in a flash, she's gone.

There are many reasons why everyone makes such a fuss about Anna Wintour. She is a Brit who has made it big in America. She is powerful, smart, elegant. Her magazine makes a fortune, her approval is courted by designers big and small. When she throws a party – as she did last week in London – the fashionistas arrive as flamboyantly as possible (Concorde, Eurostar or, at a pinch, boring old limo). But what makes her special is none of the above. What makes her special is the way Anna Wintour can make a drama out of almost anything – even a ride in a lift.

Her sense of theatre is acute and, unlike so many in her business, she doesn't overdo it. When a fur activist known as Racoon Girl threw a frozen animal on to her plate when she was lunching at the Four Seasons, Ms Wintour merely covered the furry corpse with a napkin and called for coffee. This tendency towards the dramatic marks most things in her public life – her appearance, her career, her fashion. No scene is too small to play well. Most people would have moved at least one stiletto in that lift. Not Anna. And her exit was all the better for it.

She likes exits and entrances. There have been plenty of those over the last week, after she jetted in for London Fashion Week (for the first time in years) and there will be plenty more in the weeks to come in Milan and Paris. Her entrances at these shows are famously and almost royally late.

She hates to waste time. "I don't like to make people wait," she says. Nor does she like to be kept waiting. So what she likes to do is ring the designer to find out the real start time of a show, and then arrive accordingly. She may change into that particular designer's clothes *en route* in the limo. By the time she takes her front-row seat, usually accompanied by an entourage of at least two underlings and a personal PR, everyone is looking at her.

But who is she looking at in turn? No one knows, and this is part of her own personal theatre. Her dark glasses are Jackie O-esque and she wears them indoors as well as out. Over the years she has made many excuses for this: bright lights, shyness, habit. But many people think that it is simply an affectation. Anna Wintour is sensitive to press comment (she hated the nickname Nuclear Wintour) and has made a real effort to give interviews with naked eyes. It is a painful sight. When I interviewed her a few years ago, she spent the entire time clutching a monster pair of Chanel sunglasses. She fiddled and fiddled. Several times they almost made it to her nose, only to be whipped back down to her teeny tiny lap. "It probably means something very dramatic, like that I'm hiding from the world behind them or something," she said. Yes, or something.

We are fascinated by these sunglasses, just as we are by her thinness. I mean, the woman is said to wear size 4 trousers. *The Daily Telegraph* once described her as a fabulously glamorous insect. Last week someone said that walking behind her is like watching kitchen scissors at work. Not many shoulder blades can say the same.

She is a woman who loves to lunch as long as she doesn't have to chew. She has made pushing food round her plate into something of an extreme sport. Fashion types are always talking about what she eats and the latest word is that breakfast is so out that it is never coming back this side of lunch. And, as for that, she prefers to have an egg and mayonnaise sandwich – but only every third day. Every night, though, she has a steak and some mashed potatoes. And then there's always water.

She says that when she comes back to London (and inevitably that means a suite at Claridges) she doesn't have to wait long to remember who she really is. This is because people are always mentioning it. Isn't she the daughter of Charles Wintour, a former editor of the *Evening Standard*? Or perhaps the sister of the political journalist Patrick Wintour? She is, in fact, both.

She remembers her childhood as one of extreme bouts of shyness, and being the odd one out in an academically inclined family. She was athletic instead – sprinting was her forte – and didn't go to university. At the age of 20 she became something lowly in the fashion department of *Harpers & Queen*. Even then she had something, though. "I can remember the editor saying to me that Anna was not a writer, but that she had something else; that she had the eye, and that one day she would be employing us," says the writer Vicki Wood. And indeed she would.

After five years she moved to New York in 1974. She liked the anonymity and admits that she reinvented herself. She was fired from *Harper's Bazaar* for not "understanding American fashion", and says that everyone should be sacked once. Soon, Si Newhouse hired her as creative director of American *Vogue*. She married David Shaffer, a child psychologist, and returned briefly to London to edit British *Vogue*. "That's where the Nuclear Wintour stuff started. I can't pretend that was pleasant," she says. She returned to New York and edited *House and Garden*, though not terribly successfully. Then came the editorship of *Vogue*. Since then she has never looked back.

"Working mother" is not a description that seems to fit her, but that is how she sees herself. She and her husband have two children – Charlie and Bee. They are being brought up as Americans. She herself belongs to a country somewhere over the Atlantic, and her accent fluctuates accordingly. She may come from a quintessentially British background, but there is much in Anna Wintour that shrieks New York. She is absolutely driven, a perfectionist, and punctilious too. Life is detail, detail is life. That's her world. She is not one of life's warm and sweet things, but she does try to be nice. It's just that chit-chat is such a waste of time. Why use 50 words when you can use one?

She likes to get started early. This means 5.30am. She has her non-breakfast with her children before taking them to school and is at her desk by "about" 7.50am. "I guess that's early here, but it's not there. Wall Street star... earlier – at 7am!" she says. I get the feeling she approves of this.

She likes to be in charge. "I'm horribly hands on, I'm afraid. I like to read every caption. I like to know what's going on. I find that people work better if you are talking to them all the time. I think people thrive on attention."

She tries to be home by 6pm, for dinner with her children. "I've learnt that the magazine is always going to be there the next day." She may go out to a party, but there are few late nights. She is rumoured to leave even her own parties at 11pm.

Impressive is a good word for Anna Wintour, but she is very good at diverting our attention from what is really impressive about her. People gossip about her perfectionism. Or the fact that she has a hairdresser on permanent call. Or the fact that Claridges manages to find huge bowlfuls of out-of-season peonies for her ("my favourite"). But what is really impressive about Anna Wintour is the way she has made *Vogue* into a money-making machine. "She's vastly important because it is," says one observer. "The advertising is mind-blowing. The magazine is like a telephone directory. It beats everyone else. And so she sits on top of this sort of million-billion-billion-dollar empire, and she can do no wrong. *Vogue* doesn't have to be right. It just has to say what it wants to say, and that will be it, because the commercial clout of the magazine is so powerful that it cannot be wrong."

Anna Wintour is not a journalist's editor like, say, Tina Brown. She does not take those kinds of risks. The editorial content of American *Vogue* is mainstream to a word. The fashion shoots are breathtakingly expensive and the pages of ads are simply endless.

But there is a pernicious web at work here, and it is one that she herself has spun. "Anna is running the industry far beyond her influence as a taste-maker," Condé Nast's editorial director, James Truman, said last year. "All designers check in with Anna about what she thinks is modern, and what she thinks is hip. She gives them broad trend ideas about what the public is ready for." And then, of course, she features these designs in her magazine, and tells store buyers that this is, indeed, going to be the latest trend.

Each season, after the fashion shows, she writes a catwalk report predicting which items will sell big next season. She gives this vital information to the big stores, along with tips as to what *Vogue* will be featuring. They are grateful.

"Anna tipped us off on the impact of athletic clothes for non-athletic purposes a couple of seasons ago," the fashion director at Bloomingdales explained. "We rushed to the market to look for these kinds of clothes. *Vogue* featured them editorially, and Bloomingdale's was right there at the same time, with the look in an ad and in our window displays." See how easy it is to get a licence to print money – if you are Anna Wintour. And it's the one thing that she isn't dramatic about at all.

ANN TRENEMAN

LIFE STORY

Beginnings: Born on 3 November 1949. Father is Charles Wintour, journalist and former editor. Entire family is academic, Anna being the honourable exception.
Education: Queen's College School, London; North London Collegiate School (fashion dept)
Career: Fashion editor, *Harpers & Queen*, London; *Harper's Bazaar*, New York; *Viva*; *Savvy* US *Vogue* (1983-6), editor-in-chief, British *Vogue*, editor, US *House and Garden*, editor, US *Vogue* (1988-)
Trademarks: Genetically glamorous. Addicted to sunglasses, bobbed hair, spindly heels.
Blackest moment: In 1990 she declared black to be a non-colour and remains a true non-believer.
Furriest moment: Two years ago she told her readers she had a confession to make. "I wear fur. I also eat juicy steaks." The animal activists went nuclear, attacking her with fake blood and at least one dead raccoon.
What fashion victims say: "What does she think we are, sheep?"
What people who know her say: "She's so powerful that you fear for her. All gods can be pulled down."
What she says: "You have to be true to what you are."



Anna Wintour, the most feared woman in fashion: 'Vogue just has to say what it wants, and that will be it' *Rex*

ACCIDENTAL HEROES OF THE 20TH CENTURY

29: RIP TORN, ACTOR

HE COULD have been Jack Nicholson. According to Hollywood legend, Rip Torn was due to play the part the then unknown Nicholson played in *Easy Rider*, but withdrew from the film for unspecified reasons.

The director, Dennis Hopper, claimed on a chat show that the actor was sacked from the picture after pulling a knife on him in a diner, a claim that cost Hopper $475,000 in libel damages in a Californian court, but one that fits rather nicely with Torn's abrasive image.

Knife or no knife, Rip Torn's failure to become a Hollywood superstar has blessed us with what may be the most brilliant comic turn in television history, the producer Artie in the midnight-dark satire *The Larry Sanders Show*, a work of genius and arguably as memorable as any of Nicholson's movie work.

The Larry Sanders Show has been justly praised as a deftly aimed kick in the teeth to the world of television and the cult of celebrity, but it is much more than that. Thanks in no small part to Rip Torn's Artie, the television programme transcends mere pastiche to become something approaching Greek tragedy.

Its terrible, self-absorbed characters – the monstrous egotist Larry, his emotionally-stunted sidekick Hank, the insecure writer Phil, and workaholic, womanising Artie – are the authors of their own downfall, well-rewarded materially but unable to break free from the emptiness at the centre of their lives.

When Larry (Garry Shandling) tries to escape from the show to some rural idyll, he is brought up sharp by Artie. "You're a talk show host," growls the producer, "like some creature from goddam Greek mythology – half-man, half-desk."

Artie knows there is no way out. In a previous episode he had fled to Italy to try and revive an old love-affair, which crumbled when, instead of dining al fresco on a moonlit Venetian balcony, he crept back inside to watch a dubbed *Larry Sanders Show* on Italian cable TV. Phil tries to build a new career as a sitcom writer, but when they mess with his script he returns to the comfort blanket of the show. Hank's plans to open a successful restaurant are constantly doomed to failure.

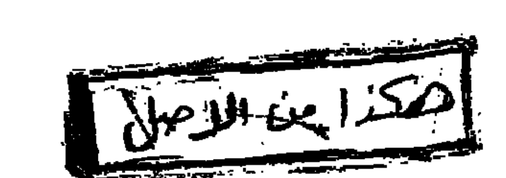
These are, of course, situations created by writers, but it is the acting, particularly Rip Torn's, that makes them real and rather poignant. Torn is brilliant even in scenes where he says nothing. As Larry and Hank argue over some piffling matter, Artie stands there taking it all in, brow furrowing, scowl deepening, as he decides which way he must jump to keep the show afloat. The show is all. In that sense, the programme is a satire not just on television but also on any kind of office life, where the cardboard boxes or custard creams being produced must take precedence over personal relationships.

Garry Shandling has said that much of his business with Artie is improvised, something Rip Torn is perfectly qualified to do, having trained at Lee Strasberg's Actors Studio in New York in the Fifties and being a great advocate of method acting. His insistence on authenticity has led to a reputation for being "difficult", not unlike Artie.

He also did his career no favours by speaking out against the Vietnam war and aligning himself with the civil rights movement. But his day has arrived. It is a minor miracle that something as dark and risky as *The Larry Sanders Show* could come from the ultra-safe world of American television.

For Rip Torn – brilliant also in films such as *Defending Your Life* (1991) and *Payday* (1972) – it is the perfect vehicle for his method acting. Shandling may insist that he will make no more episodes of *Larry Sanders*, but surely there can be no escape for these people now.





THE WEASEL

A new lavatory bowl leads to an acquaintance with the outer reaches of the design world, while the gift of a bottle of vodka raises doubts

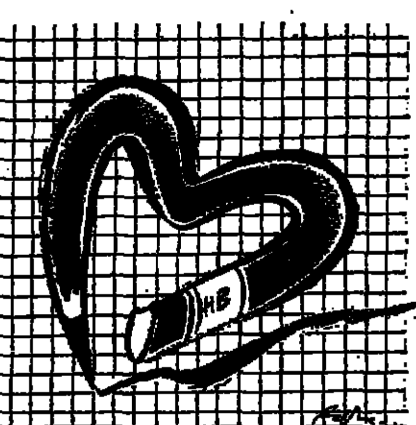
MRS WEASEL has fallen in love. Don't get *alarmed. The object of her affection* is inanimate. Porcelain, to be precise. After years of dithering over possible replacements for our decaying sanitary ware, she has finally plumped for a Philippe Starck lavatory bowl and, possibly, a bidet. (The mysterious nature of this item only deepens when you learn that the word means "small horse" in French.) Mrs W was seduced by the unfussy designs of the Gallic maestro. I was placated by the fact that the price of his new range is categorised as "moderate" by south London's leading supplier of lavvies to the gentry, but what won me over was the idiosyncratic nature of the Starck bathroom catalogue: "We dive in and let the water sprites revive our spirits. The odyssey is over. And still waters run deep."

Mrs W's decision will doubtless be the cherry on Starck's 50th birthday cake. In celebration of this momentous event, a retrospective of his eclectic work is currently taking place at Purves & Purves, the London design emporium. Items range from his Aprilia Moto 6.5 motorbike (£4,000) to the Dr Kiss toothbrush (£4) and Dr Cheese toothpick (£12). The Abratoo cutlery set appears a bargain at £21 until you realise that this price applies only to the plastic holder. The knives and forks etc will set you back another £210. Mr Meumeu, a sculptural form with protruding horns like Desperate Dan's cow pie, turns out to be a £34 cheese-grater.

You will, doubtless, be familiar with Starck's best-known work, a lemon juicer in the shape of a three-legged spacecraft (£34). Though it is a striking piece of design, owners of the object *say it is hopeless at its intended* task. Last year, there was also a vogue for Dr Skud (£5), a fly swat with a face on the business end. The tender-hearted Philippe explains: "To counteract the savagery of the blow, Dr Skud wears a delicate human face." I considered laying out £22.50 on an Excalibur plastic toilet brush to complement Mrs W's new loo, but I experienced some difficulty in extracting this aptly named item from its tight-fitting holder. (Zillionaires may consider a stainless-steel bog brush from Starck, for £170.)

I was also drawn to an object which, though not designed by his company, appears in Starck's mail-order catalogue. It is a protective respirator mask (£150) plus filter (£36.50). "Safety equipment often provokes a surprised reaction, not to mention doubts about mental health," declares *le maître*. "To be safely equipped for any possible chemical, bacteriological or radio-active mishap is either a symptom of paranoia or shows an excessively pessimistic nature. Events of this type will unfortunately become routine occurrences." It sounds the perfect accessory for the Weasel thunder-box.

Notably absent from the exhibition is Starck himself. The swarthy genius refused point-blank to attend the opening. At the back of the showroom is a display of increasingly desperate invitations from Purves & Purves and shrugging responses from a Starck underling. "I do understand very well your disappointment. Do believe it is very unpleasant to feel like a gunman," *says one*. "It has been tough to make him think positively about this event," says another. Of course, anyone who has read the tome celebrating the man and his works, *Starck* (Taschen, *£24.99), will not be surprised by his non*-appearance. Speaking in 1996, he asserted: "If [my] strategy of immateriality is successful, this implies my



eventual disappearance.... In precisely two years, I will halt my material activities." A man of his word, Philippe's latest product is a transparent plastic chair (£95). Invisibility beckons.

IT OFTEN seems that when you're looking forward to something, along comes some fragment of information that tends to dilute your anticipation. This happened the other day when a friend presented me with a bottle of vodka after visiting Russia. It was Stolichnaya, according to the Cyrillic label. But the seal had been broken and it was not the celebrated brand inside. "You've got a treat there," my chum, a medical man, *intimated. "This is home-brew. What* the Russians really drink."

So there I was, mentally licking my lips, when I came across a tiny news item which dramatically diminished my appetite: "Moscow: Every 22 minutes a Russian dies after drinking spirits of dubious origin, the Interior Ministry said, adding that in the first 11 months of last year, 21,778 people died from bad alcohol, compared with 23,983 for all of 1997." Worse still, the report added that these figures are suspiciously low. According to the Interior Ministry's own economic crimes department, the 1997 figure was nearly 43,000 deaths.

I was on the blower pronto, asking my friend about the provenance of his moonshine. Moscow, he replied, a touch narked. But where exactly? His reply was less than reassuring: "A place recommended by a Russian psychiatrist."

With the potentially poisoned chalice sitting untasted in our drinks cupboard, I pursued my researches into Russia's national grog. In *The Vodka Companion*, Desmond Begg writes: "It is estimated that the Russians still drink nearly 32 pints of vodka per capita a year, almost twice as much as Poland." This is almost three bottles a month for everyone, babies and babushkas included. With a population topping 140 million, Russia's annual consumption amounts to a staggering (for once the cliché is spot-on) 4,480 million pints, much of which must be illicit. The chances of our getting a killer bottle, while by no means impossible, were pretty remote. More reliable evidence came in the form of our doctor pal, who remained in rude good health after getting through his own stock.

There remained one final test: Mrs Weasel. *I took some as* well, of course. Not much more than a minute or two later, honest, I felt that our hooch had more characterful palate than orthodox vodka, not dissimilar to grappa. *Mrs W was less fulsome: "Smells like* a clinic." Still, it didn't put us into one.

TALKING OF psychiatrists, did you *hear Professor Lewis Wolpert* giving some stick to one on *Start the Week*? Even Jeremy Paxman, no slouch at grouchiness himself, commented on the prof's volcanic ire. Another example of Wolpert's *seething occurs in On Giants' Shoulders*, Melvyn Bragg's fine book on the great names of science. What gets Lewis's goat is the one thing that everybody thinks they know about Archimedes (287BC-212BC): "It irritates me intensely. I prefer my heroes to be more dignified... He may have been thinking about it in the bath, but it was not because he saw the water go up. That is nonsense. Do not believe a word of it!" An account of the Greek sage a few pages earlier supports the prof's opinion: "According to myth, Archimedes did not spare the time to wash." No bath, no eureka. QED.

THE WEEKLY MUSE

BY MARTIN NEWELL



To Casnewydd (Newport, Wales)
From Colchester and back again
By Super Apex on the rails
Across the lumpy counterpane
Of half-familiar western hills
Takes longer than perhaps it might.
At Reading Town the carriage fills
As more embark but none alight.

Among this crowd of "customers"
An *Indie* reader and his wife.
She limps, walks with a stick, insists
The journey isn't worth the strife,
Suggesting that they both get off.
The train is over-full, replete,
But luckily some dodgy poet
Stands up to volunteer his seat.

Now Mr Prescott, when you do
Decide to spank the railway boys,
Don't simply fine them 50p
And hint you'll take away their toys,
But hit the bandits good and hard.
They're architects of misery
And quite apart from all of this
They drain our productivity.

Spring is sprung, the grass is riz,
And scientists say the problem is
The season's earlier than it was
Some 30 years ago, because
The world pumps out more CO_2
Than prudent planets ought to do.
So why won't we forsake the car?
(See previous verses etc, blah...)

"Jogging makes the brain grow bigger":
Gives the hippocampi vigour,
Guards against the inner dunce...
Maybe scribes should try it once.
Better, though, to keep on writing –
Makes you vain but more exciting,
Witness Julie Burchill's quill.
Loved her then. I love her still.
I've asked her to the running track.
Alas, she hasn't called me back.

"Good afternoon, Sir Smashem Uppe*,
We're having tea, do take a cup.
Your neighbour claims the charges are
You've damaged his Mercedes car.
As Purley's police we've had to bring 'em
In the name of Bernard Ingham.
Pray don't apologise, old chap.
A very *trivial mishap*.
Good job it's this late in the day,
Or what might Mrs Thatcher say?"

* *With apologies to* E V *Rieu.*

SPIRIT OF THE AGE

PAUL VALLELY

The gospel according to Linda

THE THING about Don Cupitt is that he always goes that bit too far. He does it on purpose. "I like being infuriatingly *heretical," he said, as he sat in his office* in Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he was, until his retirement a couple of years ago, the dean.

And yet this time the academic, whom the tabloids once tagged the atheist Anglican, thinks there is nothing terribly controversial about his latest book, *The New Religion of Life in Everyday Speech*. He is a rangy giant of a man, whose legs seemed too long for either the chair at his desk or the armchair into which he subsequently moved as our conversation became more entangled.

"I'm always treated as way out when I'm reviewed in theology journals," he said, ruffling the shock of vigorous grey hair that tops his head. "And yet all I'm saying here is what most ordinary people think. I'm only trying to persuade the reader of what he knows already."

His latest thesis is that the word "life" has replaced "God" in modern speech patterns – a change that he reckons amounts to "a major religious event" that has gone unnoticed over the last three decades.

Just as the contemporary cult of celebrity is the late modern return of the cult of saints, he pointed out, so other religious impulses have been refocused in our language. "Celebrities act out our myths, embody our causes, are our role models and have become the people after whom we name our children, just as saints once were," he said. Sometimes we make the con*nection consciously, as with the "Saint* Linda" posters when Linda McCartney died, or the talk of the beatification of Diana, Princess of Wales. "So it is with words. There's a world view that is built into ordinary language."

To prove it he has studied 150 modern proverbs and epigrams which show how comprehensive has been the shift from the idea of life-after-death to "something that gives itself to us in the here and now".

The book lists phrases about life in 14 different categories, all of which correspond to the old ways of speaking about God. Life is a self-propagating power (as is revealed by phrases such as "a spark of life"); it is a mystery ("the meaning of life"); it is personified ("life's been good to me"); it is awesome and holy ("the sanctity of life"); it challenges us ("today is the first day of the rest of your life"); it demands total commitment ("quality of life"); it is a grave sin to despair against it ("you've got the wrong attitude to life"); it demands conversion ("an aim in life"); it is providential ("life goes on"); it prompts acceptance ("such is life") and also demands joy ("this is the life"); it contains an eschatology ("life is short"); it should not be tempted ("living dangerously"); and those without it are bereft ("life is passing me by").

"In the past life was hard and wretched, as the Prayer Book used to put it at funerals," he said. "But today, for most people, hopes of the future life are being realised in the present. *What was restricted to the gentry in* the 18th century and the middle class in the 19th has been democratised and everyone assumes the right to enjoy life rather than merely endure it in the hope of reward in the hereafter."

It has shifted the focus of the modern psyche. Gone is the idea of a world of gold and jewels where nothing ever fades. In its place is an invigorated appreciation of the transient. "Now even the Church is catching up with this – as with Christian Aid's slogan: 'We believe in life before death'," he said. "Ironically the clergy have become one of the most enthusiastic users of the 'life' vocabulary, particularly Catholic fundamentalists such as the Pope. But, of course, they are well behind what ordinary people have recognised instinctively."

Where Dr Cupitt goes too far this time, it seems to me, is that he is not merely content to describe this shift. Rather, while remaining a priest and a communicant member of the Church of England, he endorses it without reservation. "The old repressive and disciplinarian approaches, the notions of original sin which made people despise themselves, the insistence on conscience and duty, are being replaced. Instead we have human rights, lifestyle, coming out, self-expression and affirmation – a world where everyone has the chance to say their thing and to strut their stuff."



A saint for our times? Linda McCartney's London memorial service

This does not exactly seem an adequate substitute. Whatever was wrong with the Nicene Creed, it needs to be replaced with something more substantial than the lyrics of "My Way". But Dr Cupitt was having none of that. Frank Sinatra is "the prophet of Nietzscheanism in popular song", he said, suggested that "the vocabulary of human rights is the beginnings of a pan-religious world ethic".

"Morality isn't built into the structure of the universe; we inherit morality like language," he said. "And, like language, morality changes. We live in a world of continuous moral change. Values are transient and are rethought by each generation. Some values live longer than others, just as some words do, though what they mean will shift subtly over the years. You don't need an external policeman to keep the English language in place. It's kept going just by being used. It's the same with morality."

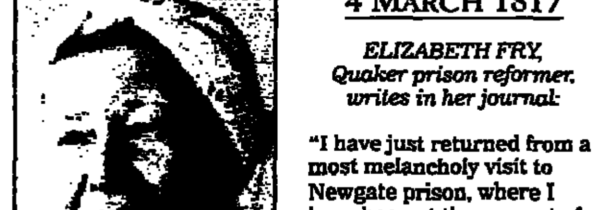
I was not sure about this; left to their own devices people routinely behave badly. He disagreed. "Our need to get on with one another prevents us from developing a private morality, as it does a private language. In biology, natural selection produces livelier, tougher plants. So it will with morals. You have to trust in the processes of life."

If the analogies between language, biology and morality were exact then perhaps I might. Or, then again, perhaps I *should just start to look on* the bright side of life.

DAYS LIKE THESE

27 FEBRUARY 1947

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR, French author (pictured), writes in her journal about a stay in Los Angeles:



"We are invited to lunch by George Stevens [co-founder of Liberty Films]. He has reserved a table at Lucy's, a restaurant situated between the three big studios: Warner, RKO and Paramount. The elegance of the patrons is rather flamboyant: the platinum blondes are dressed in soft pink and pale blue, and as in New York, they're decorated with feathers. After martinis – *which* are to martinis in Paris what the ideal circle is to circles drawn on a blackboard - the meal is delicious. George has asked two scriptwriters to join us, a man and a woman. They repeat to me that censorship has become increasingly harsh in the past two years, which makes coming up with a subject more and more difficult. They think of making a film from the latest John Steinbeck book, *Wayward Bus*, but there's a respectable young woman in it who sleeps with the driver, purely for pleasure. It is impossible to include such an episode in a movie, yet it's essential to the story. It will have to be replaced by a sentimental drama of the usual moral and touching sort, which will distort the characters and remake the plot so drastically that nothing will be left of the original novel. They hesitate. They tell me they constantly find themselves hamstrung in this way. The scripts are becoming increasingly stupid and monotonous, and the public is beginning to notice. Hence the success of English and Italian films, and even French films."

4 MARCH 1817

ELIZABETH FRY, Quaker prison reformer, writes in her journal:

"I have just returned from a most melancholy visit to Newgate prison, where I have been at the request of Elizabeth Fricker, previous to her execution [for robbery] tomorrow morning, at eight o'clock. I found her much hurried, distressed, and tormented in mind, her hands cold, and covered with something like the perspiration preceding death, and in a universal tremor. Beside this poor young woman, there are also six men to be hanged, one of whom has a wife near her confinement, also condemned, and seven young children. Since the awful report came down, he has become quite mad, from horror of mind. A strait waistcoat could not keep him within bounds; he has just bitten the turnkey; I saw the man come out with his hand bleeding, as I passed the cell."

IAN IRVINE

Our colour became to us a chain



CLASSIC PODIUM

From a speech by the black rights activist Malcolm X at a meeting in Detroit, delivered the day after his house was bombed and a week before his assassination

(14 FEBRUARY 1965)

THERE IS a time to be cool and a time to be hot. See – you got messed up into thinking that there is only one time for everything. There is a time to love and a time for hate. Even Solomon said that. You're just taking something out of the book that fits your cowardly nature when you don't want to fight, and you say: "Well, Jesus said don't fight." But I don't even believe Jesus said that.

I wouldn't call on anybody to be violent without a cause. But I think the black man in this country, above and beyond people all over the world, will be more justified when he stands up and starts to protect himself, no matter how many necks he has to break and heads he has to crack.

I say it is time for black people to put together the type of action, the unity, that is necessary to pull the sheet off of them so they won't be frightening black people any longer. That's all. And when we say this, the press calls us "racist in reverse". "Don't struggle except within the ground rules that the people you're struggling against have laid down." Why, this is insane, but it shows how they can do it.

When you start thinking for yourselves, you frighten them, and they try to block your getting to the public, for the fear that if the public listens to you then the public won't listen to them anymore. And they've got certain Negroes whom they have to keep blowing up in the papers to make them look like leaders, so that the people will keep on following them, no matter how many knocks they get on their heads following them.

This is how the man does it, and if you don't wake up and find out how he does it I tell you, they'll be building gas chambers and gas ovens pretty soon – I don't mean those kind you've got at home in your kitchen – and you'll be in one of them, just as the Jews ended up in gas ovens over there in Germany. You're in a society that's just as capable of building gas ovens for black people as Hitler's society was.

You know yourself that we have been a people who hated our African characteristics. We hated our heads, we hated the shape of our noses, we wanted one of those long, dog-like noses, you know; we hated the colour of our skin, hated the blood of Africa that was in our veins. And in hating our features and our skin and our blood, why, we had to end up hating ourselves. And we hated ourselves.

Our colour became to us a chain – we felt that it was holding us back; our *colour became to us like a prison* which we felt was keeping us confined, not letting us go this way or that way. We felt that all of these restrictions were based solely upon our colour, and the psychological reaction to that would have to be that, as long as we felt imprisoned or chained or trapped by black skin, black features and black blood, that skin and those features and that blood holding us back automatically had to become hateful to us. And they became hateful to us.

They made us feel inferior; they made us feel inadequate, made us feel helpless. And when we fell victims to this feeling of inadequacy or inferiority or helplessness, we turned to somebody else to show us the way. We didn't have confidence in another black man to show us the way, or black people to show us the way.

In those days we didn't. We *didn't* think a black man could do anything except play some horns – you know, make some sound and make you happy with some songs and in that way. Doing things for ourselves. Because we felt helpless. What made us feel helpless was our hatred for ourselves.

Just because you're in this country doesn't make you an American. No, *you've got to* go farther than that before you can become an American. You've got to enjoy the fruits of Americanism. You haven't enjoyed those fruits. You've enjoyed the thorns. You've enjoyed the thistles. But you have not enjoyed the fruits, no sir. You have fought harder for the fruits than the white man has, you have worked harder for the fruits than the white man has, but you've enjoyed less.

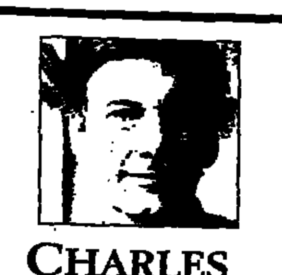
I say again that I'm not a racist. I don't believe in any form of segregation. I'm for brotherhood for everybody, but I don't believe *in forcing* brotherhood upon people who don't want it. Let us practise brotherhood among ourselves, and then if others want to practise brotherhood with us, we're for *practising it with* them also. But I don't think that we should run around trying to love somebody who doesn't love us.





THE SATURDAY ESSAY

Our modern age requires a new definition of beauty



CHARLES JENKS

The conventionally ugly can be perceived as beautiful, as shown by the response to some of this century's works of art



Technically and formally innovative, Frank Gehry's New Guggenheim has met with huge acclaim from the public *Pablo Sanchez/Reuters*

IT IS not only Prince Charles who bemoans the loss of beauty in our culture, but almost everyone: the dislike of an ugly environment is not an acquired taste. Yet there is a problem with an uncomplicated view of the situation. For more than 150 years, artists and architects have shied away from seeking beauty for itself, and have doubted that there is an objective measure of it. Indeed, the ironic muddle over the term is rather democratic. People go on using a word which they doubt has any real substance, a situation I hope to clarify, by redefining its meaning here. Four essential aspects of the concept, evident in recent work, show what is at stake.

The first component is the most obvious. In a beautiful work there must be some formal coherence and brilliance; or, put another way, a relatively complex manipulation of a formal language. This, rather than a particular type of harmony, is what matters, because we can experience all patterns in nature as beautiful, not just the spheres, cones and cylinders of classical and modern aesthetics. For too long the West has mistaken one canon of beauty for the more general principle. But, as scientists have recently discovered, the eye and mind respond to every conceivable pattern – spirals, crinkles, folds, fields, zigzags and dots – all the fractal forms that underlie nature. It is the particular concentration on their intensification which constitutes the formal part of beauty. Put in a nutshell, this aspect of beauty, this intensification, concerns patterns about patterns, or patterns squared. This sounds unexceptional, but it contains a surprise.

It means that conventionally ugly patterns may be beautiful – even repugnant things such as gargoyles, or Brutalist buildings, or Chinese yellow-wax rocks. The last named can appear initially repulsive, but a Chinese connoisseurship has grown which celebrates their particular qualities, just as we have done with grotesques, and a host of modern works of the last 50 years. Beauty can refer to these discordant patterns so long as they are developed consistently and inventively, or when the patterns are self-reflexive and heightened.

The conventional definitions of beauty, for instance that of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, mention harmony, a perfect combination of unity and variety – that is one formal type: "such combined perfection of form and charm of colouring as affords keen pleasure to the sense of sight". The problem is that, in the 20th century, we have extended the concept way beyond such things as charm, grace and the perfection of fitness.

This extension, the second component of beauty, has led to "the tradition of the new". An old beauty is, if not tiring, still not quite as exciting as one perceived for the first time – caught on the wing. The reasons for this are complex and probably exist on several different levels, some of which have been illuminated by information theory, others by psychology and cognitive theory. One reason for the importance of the new concerns the way creativity stimulates neuronal growth and the way we experience it. To over-simplify: when the mind perceives a new idea it is partly aroused by its own growth. It is as if the mind received a natural pleasure in feeling its dendrites coalesce in new ways, feeling its glial cells send little nodules spinning down the neuronal highways to meet up with those on a different path. We can now watch such micro-growth on film and literally see new ideas linking up with old ones. Perhaps this is too physical a description, but I think it has a suggestive aspect. For instance, every time one hears a new joke, and finds it funny, the mind bristles with new connective tissue, and the feeling of pleasure – not to say the laughter – signals the construction of new pathways.

A particularly powerful example of this linkage creates the pleasure we have when perceiving a striking breakthrough. This one-off experience, when it is really significant, can be remembered for life. I would call it "Eureka learning", after the mythic occasion on which Archimedes, getting into his bathtub and displacing water, suddenly realised that the specific weight of gold could be measured. "Eureka, I found it", the delighted cry accompanying a substantial breakthrough, is more powerful than the everyday, micro-creativity we experience because the frames of reference are more deeply separated, more disjunctive, more unlikely. Hence our delight at the shock of the new when it is a real breakthrough, and not something merely different or clever.

I think this explains the truth behind every avant-garde movement, all the "isms" that have become "wasms", and why we value them. In spite of the bad art produced in their wake, their breakthroughs create momentary standards that are perceived as beautiful. They create a new way of seeing, feeling, experiencing the world, a new kind of knowledge, and this cognitive extension is an essential part of the experience of beauty. In short, the second principle explains why, in any strong experience of the beautiful, there must be some component of new knowledge, new creative linkage.

In effect, any new definition of beauty must deal positively with changing taste. Historians make the valid point that the standards of beauty are always being reset. In part they are culturally constructed. As information theorists showed in the Fifties and Sixties, the beautiful is a judicious mixture of a) what was beautiful yesterday plus b) a significant variation from it – a "swerve", in the well-known formulation of Harold Bloom. This explains why every avant garde has the difficult job of honouring and killing its parent at the same time and why, as a result of this double-take, there is coherent movement to art history – a dialectic of themes and variations from them.

A third criterion of beauty is that it entails an imaginative projection of a particular kind: one that invests an object with attributes of perfection. Perceiving is always an active investment of hopes, desires and goals of various kinds; it is oriented to a future state and, where beauty is concerned, that state is assumed to be ideal in some respects. Of course, the object must be suitable for such projection; classical beauties such as the Taj Mahal remind us of that. The moon, before Galileo showed it to be a dead lump of matter with earthly mountains, was a suitable object; it remains so for many, even after astronauts have played golf on it. The Taj and the moon were both suitable receptacles for articulating our wishes. Suggestive figures – enigmas, as the painter De Chirico argued – may also work this way. "Always suggest, never name" was an injunction of Symbolist poets and painters in the 19th century, and much modern and post-modern art has proved the point.

The fourth component to beauty concerns subject matter. The content, theme, idea, or archetypal emotion at stake must be sufficiently important for a work to be called beautiful. Content matters. But content, as some abstract painters and musicians have shown, can approach pure form, if it is manipulated well enough to become the mimesis or analogue of an idea.

In effect, the articulation of an abstract pattern becomes experienced as the equivalent of deep emotion; the formal pattern becomes the content, a truth often observed when someone, calling a symphony beautiful, remarks on the merging of content and form. The abstract Expressionism of Jackson Pollock, on view at the Tate from 11 March, is a particularly apt example of this truth: the patterns of his painting performance were translated directly on to the canvas as the expression of significant emotion.

Yet these cases of abstract formal brilliance, however important in themselves, are limiting ones and they do not address the main point. Beauty thrives on an emotion we find significant, or an idea we find fundamental to life: love, quite obviously, and first and last things, and our relation to the rest of humanity, nature and the cosmos. It is clear that all the modern masterpieces have some archetypal idea behind them, as exemplified by Stravinsky's *Le Sacre de Printemps*, T S Eliot's "The Wasteland", Picasso's *Guernica* and Le Corbusier's Ronchamp. The same is true for post-modern exemplars such as Philip Glass's *Einstein on the Beach*, Salmon Rushdie's *Midnight Children*, Ron Kitaj's *If Not, Not* and Frank Gehry's New Guggenheim in Bilbao. One reason for the importance of the idea in such masterworks is not hard to find: it is a major spur to creativity – either an alluring goal, or the boot that kicks the artist several feet ahead of a competitor.

Gehry's new building illustrates all the aspects of beauty I have mentioned and, most importantly, their synergetic interaction. First, it has innovated on many technical and aesthetic levels at the same time: for instance, a French computer program has dimensioned and cut the curved shapes so there is little wasted material, little greater expense than if the building were constructed of repeated rectangles. It consists of something like 26 self-similar fractals, petal shapes with pinched edges that lead the eye to a culmination, like the arrises in conventional architecture, and these forms also sculpt the light quite beautifully. So new knowledge, both formal and technical, is here an essential part of the experience of the building.

Second, the exuberant metaphors of growth – the building seems to explode like a burgeoning plant – are appropriate for its cultural and civic role and, inside the museum, they heighten one's experience of the art. Being abstract and in a new formal language, the patterns suggest such metaphors without naming them. And finally, reflecting the moods and colours of the Nervion river, the setting sun, the undulating hills and passing trains, the building becomes a fitting symbol for the city. Why? Because it mediates between the very large-scale, the cosmos, the mid-scale, surrounding nature, and everyday life. A deep symbol always ties us into the whole context this way, and it is this that amounts to the significant content.

In effect, the four areas I have singled out have been knitted together in such a synergetic way that one cannot immediately understand the motives behind the forms. They are multiply coded, multivalent, many-motivated and ambiguous; any form or function slides into several contexts at once, and does so in a new way. As a result, many interpretations are possible, indeed inevitable, as in a response to all great works of art. One measure of worth, or beauty, is simply the number of different ways a work can be plausibly decoded. And since it has been encoded in a way that extends tradition, it will be perceived and understood in new ways.

The great response to the New Guggenheim shows that its values are being strongly perceived. Both architects and the general public are excited by the building, and I think the reason for this is that they are learning from it while enjoying sensual pleasures. Its strength comes from combining two powerful instincts – the drives to know more about the universe, and to relate to the cosmos aesthetically, erotically and mentally. Many people have called the Gehry building beautiful, and that raises the general question I am posing in a striking form. Perhaps, since it is not conventionally harmonious, we need an entirely new word for the experience that combines the four areas? Perhaps "Cognirotic perception"? Or, the combined perception of the "Sensuolect", or the act of "Erocination"? These won't do, so, until we find a substitute, we are stuck with the old term. Whatever the word, however, the key issue remains at stake: the creation of cultural value.

BAROMETER

SEAN O'GRADY

Axed
Good-bye, Crinkly Bottom, Farewell NTV. The BBC has driven a stake through the heart of Mr Blobby. *Noel Edmonds' House Party*, the show that made *Gladiators* look like Jacob Bronowski's *The Ascent of Man*, is dead. Noel used to send some of his guests to far-flung, isolated locations if they failed a simple test. Now that Noelly has failed the ratings test, the BBC also wants to send him somewhere. As the BBC said: "We're moving on to something different. 'Axed' is a negative word. This is a positive, forward move." Couldn't agree more.

Who's that girl?
It's Barbie, who celebrates her 40th birthday on 9 March. Barbie has an extremely impressive CV. According to her makers, Mattel, she is a world-famous actress, an award-winning rock star and an Olympic figure-skater. She holds a full pilot's licence, has achieved several masters degrees (including veterinary science and business administration) and still has time to be an active member of all four branches of the US military. Barbie is entering middle age with her raciest look yet – she is now into Body Art (butterfly tatoos).

Who's that boy?
It's Big John, of Edinburgh, who also likes Body Art. If you want to join in the latest craze, then *de rigueur* are plain black tribal designs derived from Maori facial markings. But it can create problems. Martin Skinner, a psychologist at Warwick University, says: "People may be put off tattoos because of the associations they make. Even an ornate butterfly might suggest something about self-inflicted pain, which is an unpleasant association." Don't tell Barbie.

Cool for cats
Feline Body Art. Here is Mr Moon, a Persian cream cat. He is a favourite to win prizes at New York's International Cat Show at Madison Square.

What's up, Doc?
Big Bunny Body Art. An unfeasibly large rabbit named Bodmin, weighing in at about 18lb. He lives, on a strict cauliflower-and-cabbage diet, at the Stoneywish Country Park, Ditchling, East Sussex.

Should men have babies?
Lord Winston, the fertility expert, says that it is possible to make a man pregnant using the latest techniques. This is Tiny, of the rock group Ultrasound, at the launch of London Fashion Week, looking as if he's about to give birth to a mule. Now, that really would be unique.



MY WEEK

CRAIG KELLY, WHO PLAYS THE PART OF VINCE TYLER IN 'QUEER AS FOLK'



Craig Kelly of 'Queer as Folk'

Sunday
A car picks me up from the flat which I share with my brother in Muswell Hill, north London. I meet up with Charlie Hunnam who plays Nathan in *Queer as Folk* at Channel 4, to do an interview. It's a laugh. It's my first TV interview in ages and they are very supportive.

Charlie and I then go to meet up with my brother and Michael, our PR man, for a few drinks. We go to the Coach and Horses in Soho and then to Pierre Victoire for supper. I am exhausted and have an early night.

Monday
Today I do a phone interview for *Boys* magazine, which is distributed in gay pubs and clubs around the country. In the afternoon I go to look at two flats that I'm thinking of buying in North London. I take my brother and his girlfriend Jackie along for a second and third opinion.

I have to get up early tomorrow to appear on *This Morning* so tonight I stay in and watch the telly. I'm really looking forward to meeting Richard and Judy: the programme is such an institution.

Tuesday
Today's the day *Queer as Folk* is to be broadcast and I'm up early to get a car to the studio for Richard and Judy. They are very friendly, and it's a relaxed, fun interview.

In the afternoon I make an offer on a flat. My brother, who's also an actor, comes back from work and surprises me with a bottle of champagne. Then we watch the show. It's always quite an experience to see something you're proud of on TV. Immediately it finishes the phones start ringing – both my mobile and my land line. First to call are my mum and dad; they have enjoyed the programme and are proud of me.

All my friends are absolutely amazed by the show; they love it and think it is slick and stylish. I get carried away with all the excitement and next time I look at the clock it's nearly one in the morning. I've got to do the *Big Breakfast* tomorrow so I turn my phone off. I really want to sleep, but can't. I listen to *Moon Safari* by Air. It's very mellow and eventually I drop off.

Wednesday
Wake up about 6am not wanting to get up. A really nice silver Jag comes to pick me up, but I can't appreciate it because I'm too tired.

I meet up with Charlie [Nathan] at the studio and have a coffee. This is the first interview after the show and I'm wondering which route they will go down in terms of attitude. Johnny Vaughan's first question is "What was the show about?" So I tell him that the show is about love, friends, and the life of three central characters who happen to be gay. I've probably said more than is expected for a first response, but the rest of the interview is fine.

I want to sleep but remember that I've got a radio voice-over to do in Soho. On my way there I go in to HMV and buy CDs by Casius, Stereophonics, Kula Shaker, the new single by Blur, and Maxwell's *Urban Hang Suite* and the soundtrack to *Shaft*.

I discover that my offer on the flat has been accepted. I'm over the moon and in bed by 9pm.

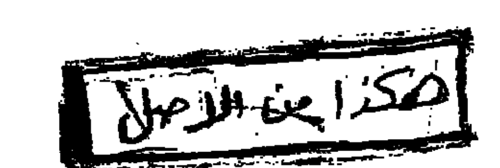
Thursday
Get up at 9am to do another radio voice-over in Soho. Then the rest of today is spent with my accountant.

In the evening I go to The Church pub in Muswell Hill with some mates. *Queer as Folk* is reviewed on *The Late Review*. I expected a negative response but they all loved it, which is a nice end to the evening.

Friday
Overnight I have developed a terrible cough. I have a telephone interview for BBC Radio Leeds and hope I won't be spluttering everywhere. They try to touch on the more controversial aspects of the show but I've got used to dealing with these questions now. The rest of the day is spent sorting out the details on the house. In the evening I go to Blacks, a drinking-club in Soho, until 1am.

INTERVIEW BY DAISY PRICE





Norman Rosenthal was the man behind the infamous Sensation exhibition. But, he says, you ain't seen nothing yet. By **David Lister**

The eye of the beholder



Norman Rosenthal in an exhibition room at the RA: 'Art is an extremely rich way of getting through life' *Brian Harris*

Sensation, with Damien Hirst's shark, Tracey Emin's love tent and Marcus Taylor's painting of Myra Hindley was the most controversial exhibition in the Royal Academy's history. Also one of the most successful. So when the Academy announced this week that it was to put on a sequel, Sensation 2, I expected to find its garrulous impresario dying to talk about it.

Impresario, by the way, is his word. It's not a word most curators use to describe themselves, but the Royal Academy's exhibition secretary, Norman Rosenthal, is a showman – and he knows it. "I love art, but I'm not an artist. I'm an impresario. I'm a stage manager. I get it together. Yes?"

And a good impresario wants to shout about his next project. Sensation 2 isn't for another year. At the moment he is working on a major Van Dyck exhibition. And this impresario gives the art history equivalent of "You ain't seen nothing yet".

"When we see the extraordinary Genoese portraits here in the autumn – they are as extraordinary as anything that has ever been done by human beings. Hnnh?"

There's a fair bit of Rosenthal in that. Not just the paradoxical habit of ending his most assertive statements with a questioning grunt that is seeking approval; more the increasingly unusual ability, indeed eagerness, to enthuse as much about an Old Master ("The best way to learn about art is literally to learn the National Gallery") as about Damien Hirst, a favourite of Rosenthal's who caused a bit of a furore when he claimed that Norman had discussed possible membership of the Royal Academy with him. Rosenthal probably did; but then, as he is the first to admit, he speaks his thoughts out loud all the time without always going through the relevant procedures and committees. And it can get him into trouble, as around the time of Sensation when he was called before the academicians like a naughty schoolboy and censured for being publicly rude about some of their number who had criticised Sensation. He had said on television of the septuagenarian figurative painter John Ward: "What is the point of painting a picture unless it is going to change the world? Maybe I am wrong and he is right, and the world will suddenly declare John Ward RA to be a great artist, but at this moment in time I doubt it." Ward, in turn, told the press. "I want his balls." They don't waste words at the heart of Britain's art establishment.

"The members of the Royal Academy are wonderfully nice people," Rosenthal says now. "You have to take these things seriously but with a certain sense of humour. But you have to deliver the goods here. If I had three or four years of flops, I'd be out."

Anyway, Rosenthal apologised and censure is as far as disciplining him was ever likely to go. He is a loose cannon, but one whose touch with exhibitions, or as he terms it, "flash instinct", is so unfailingly sure – and well before the current Monet blockbuster he was changing perceptions of art in Britain – that the Academy simply couldn't afford to lose him. The fustier academicians have to grit their teeth and bear it. And perhaps they quietly admire a man who believes every picture should change the world.

Besides, he is always prepared to justify his unbridled enthusiasms. So I challenge him on Van Dyck. Marvellous artist, but can his paintings really be "as extraordinary as anything ever done by human beings"? As extraordinary as the seven wonders of the world? Rosenthal does not pause. "Yes. These are a single person's experience. A wonder of the world is architecture. But this is imagination that has gone into these portraits, transforming what were probably quite boring people into substance and poetry."

That's passion, but probably ranks only eight on the Rosenthal scale. Force 10 for him was the *Sistine Madonna* by Raphael in Dresden. "I got up at four in the morning to go there. It was minus 20 degrees centigrade. When I stood in front of it, nothing else existed. I walked out of the room backwards at six in the evening."

For someone with a passion for both the cutting edge of contemporary art and the European Old Masters, the Royal Academy is the perfect place to be as it is the only gallery which embraces the two equally. And Rosenthal says he "wakes up every morning not believing how lucky I am to be here". He arrived at the Royal Academy from the ICA in 1977. And it was in 1981, with A New Spirit in Painting, that he invigorated the art world: an exhibition that brought acclaim to the likes of Baselitz and Schnabel. Along with exhibitions of Picasso's later work and American Art In The 20th Century, and the insights brought by the major shows on photography and pop art, not to mention two Monet blockbusters, he turned what could have been an institution simply showcasing academicians' work into a place where reputations were made and whole movements redefined.

But while Rosenthal looks with satisfaction on a London with unprecedented interest in contemporary art, he remembers that it was not ever thus. "I can remember when only about 300 people in London were interested," he says "It was a tiny audience for contemporary art. Thirty people at exhibitions, and always the same people. Rather like the situation is now for contemporary music, the world of Harry Birtwistle and Tommy Ades."

With a few pals like Nicholas Serota, now director of the Tate and Charles Saatchi, he was instrumental in changing that. "I knew Charles 25 years ago when he only had a small collection and worked at a small advertising agency. Nick put on Joseph Beuys in Oxford and I put Beuys on at the ICA. I called it Art Into Society, Society Into Art. We didn't come together consciously to plot it. But art is a language. And we have striven to get people familiar with the language. There's no great moral imperative about being interested in art. But it's an extremely rich way of getting through life. Better than trainspotting and, in my opinion, better than football."

His power to mould public thinking on contemporary art was not applauded by everyone. The late art critic Peter Fuller, founding editor of the magazine *Modern Painters*, fulminated about Rosenthal and friends as "the academy of the avant-garde". But Rosenthal rapidly won over the doubters.

For Rosenthal's personal development, the most significant exhibition was on the Spanish painter Murillo. His opposite number at the Prado in Madrid was, and is, Manuela Marques. Their professional relationship became a personal one, but she lives in Madrid with their two daughters aged seven and five, and the couple indulge in a lot of commuting and faxing.

"This is the age of the phone and the fax, and so we can communicate. I go there every two weeks and they come here quite a lot. In Madrid, I go and play in the park with my children. There are all sorts of things I would like to share with her that I can't share. But we speak every day."

They knew each other for 10 years before getting married, a fact he explains with a curiously typical and disarming mix of art, life, love, logistics, and the universe. "I don't like mixing my private life with my professional life. Do you know what I mean? She is very involved with Goya and has strong ideas about Velázquez. Why do people get married? Life is a constellation. And it's very nice."

His relatively late marriage combined with his love of music (he was on the Royal Opera board for a while and is happy to go to a concert every night of the week) keep him aware that there is life beyond art. He expressed it in a typically memorable vein recently: "Art is nothing compared to life. Nothing is more beautiful than a tree. I discovered that in the summer. No work of art can compete with a tree. But art is a fantastic thing because it helps you look at a tree."

Meanwhile, he will give few clues about Sensation 2 other than to say he has "three models going round in my head" but will make no final decision until much nearer the time as such an exhibition "has to be about what is happening". He adds: "I do an exhibition to please myself because if I please myself there's just a chance it might please someone else. Those who don't do it for themselves get it wrong."

And, concluding with a supremely Rosenthal flourish combining art history, fact, philosophy and wild fancy, he adds: "We have had two great innovative exhibitions here which have revealed what art is and what it can be: A New Spirit In Painting and Sensation. Both were put on with great speed. Sensation was put on because we failed to get another show from Berlin. Charles Saatchi and I weren't going to put Sensation together for another three or four years. And I said 'now!'. It's like things are meant to happen. I'm not religious in the ordinary sense of the word. But it's mystical. Things are meant to happen."



This green unpleasant land

On the anniversary of the Countryside March, Stevie Morgan came to London in search of bright lights and entertainment. She found a silent, dogged population staring at pigeons

City-dweller Andrew Mueller has nothing against the country: he finds it ideal for keeping large animals, and it looks good from passing trains. Just don't ask him to go there...



John Lawrence

The irritation starts around Slough, when the mobile phone boys get going. Like all the other city types they're never content with the present, they're always panting for the next moment: Pace as a substitute for content.

So by the time I've got to Paddington, eavesdropping on the boring half of six conversations has made me grumpy. Still, I leave the train with the sense of expectation which always accompanies my arrival here. I mean swinging London, right, the place where exciting stuff happens.

The first disappointment is that there is no one on the platform that I know. Outrageous! I have 18 friends in London and not one of them is among the hundreds on the concourse! What's the point of a crowded place if you don't run into somebody you know? Still there is the rest of the day, I could get lucky...

I don't get lucky on the Tube. But then it looks as though nobody does. There's an overwhelming atmosphere of dull misery. Not even the punk guy with the pinstripe suit and the crimson hair looks like he has much fun, and the young black Maya Angelou lookalike seems ready to slap everyone in the carriage. It's like we've all been given one month to live and have to spend it here on the Bakerloo line. Perhaps some of us have been given just one month to live – who knows what fascinating ramifications of human experience we could share, if only somebody would speak. They look like an interesting bunch to me, but I'll never see them again. The train doors open, and another lot of strangers sluices in.

I walk across Trafalgar Square. I need animals as an antidote to all this city. Passing through the pigeons with their dry, taffeta rustle of feathers all around me is very comforting. Other people are seeking the solace of non-human life forms too. How come, if the architecture and the cultural buzz are so great in the city, people come here to see pigeons? Not one of the 50 people hanging out here even glances up at poor old Horatio. (Incidentally, on a nice day Londoners don't play in the traffic, they go and find a piece of imitation countryside, the park.)

A guy from Battersea and his grandson are covered in birds: "I bring him every week," the man tells me. "I always tell him how these are wild birds." With pigeon food at 25p a shot, this could be the only entertainment bargain left in London.

Who knows what fascinating experiences we could share, if only someone would speak



I hail a taxi. At least taxi drivers talk to you. And God knows there's always time to talk in a London cab. The traffic is parked from Charing Cross to Fulham. By the time I arrive (having navigated for the driver using my pocket *A to Z*. The Knowledge! Pah!) I know about all his children's careers, marriages and interior decor. "Course, I don't live in London," he says. "I like the country. Hendon's where I go to roost."

The ignorance of the city-ite is almost touching. They seem to believe that the Wylde starts at Hampstead, and anywhere west of Swindon is virgin rainforest. I know a high-powered lawyer who stood in my garden and expressed astonishment that potatoes came from underground.

At the meeting my colleagues are concerned about my journey from "The Country". When it turns out it's taken me less time to get here from Devon than it has taken them from Chiswick, Greenwich and Camden, there is a short but significant silence. "So why do you live in London, then?" I ask, perhaps a little unkindly in the circumstances. "I've forgotten," is the sole reply.

Back in the taxi I have time to read *Time Out*, every word. Great stuff to do! So this is why people live in London! Although perhaps not if I'm to believe the twentysomething publicist in the cab with me. "I thought London people went to the theatre every night," she says, "and talked about exhibitions all the time. Then I moved here and found they all go home to Hammersmith and play Ludo."

I decide to do some culture. I choose a flamenco performance and phone for tickets on my jaded friend's mobile. It's sold out. I walk, dismally, to see a movie instead, and in spite of the fact that it's OK, I feel somehow cheated. That's the trouble with London, someone always seems to be having a better time in the restaurant that you didn't book, or with the theatre tickets that you couldn't buy.

I climb on the train home, exhausted and dissatisfied, like child who threw up on the waltzers and the dodgems. London can be a great ride, but who wants to live in an amusement park?

For the huddled masses who inhabit Britain's big cities, a move to the countryside is as common a daydream as a functioning public transport system. We see the advertisements in the property sections of the Sunday papers, we calculate that for the price of our modest inner-city apartment we could buy a sprawling estate with servants' quarters, helipad and dolphinarium, and the reverie commences: luxuriant green countryside instead of chaotic, claustrophobic urban squalor; the shrieks and wails of car alarms replaced by the twittering of distant songbirds; the looming menace of shell-suited glue-sniffers beside the bus shelter exchanged for the genial company of stout farming folk around the welcoming hearth of the thatched village pub.

We think of the country and think of space and peace. We rarely, in the grip of our absurd rustic dementia, stop to think about their corollaries – mud and boredom – and then we get off the train and find ourselves confronted with terrifying immensities of both. This week, I tooled about three poky settlements in Gloucestershire, all of which were the kind of places that you can imagine were forced to close their zoos when the chicken died.

Granted, the tiny towns were kind of cute – twee little clusters of quaint sandstone cottages of the sort that we city folk generally assume only exist next to model trains, on the cover of *Horse & Hound* magazine, or in the imagination of Thomas Hardy. The problem was that they shared another primary characteristic with model trains, *Horse & Hound* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* – they were insufferably, unbelievably, eye-wateringly, fist-chewingly boring. On the front page of the local paper, a breathlessly written story told of the delight of some hairy-handed yokel who had recently received a letter from Australia that had taken only 34 hours from posting to delivery. While we are accustomed to making jokes about the people in places like this pointing at aeroplanes, it is staggering to contemplate that they may not even have heard of them.

Partly to try to get into the spirit of my rural odyssey, but mostly for want of anything else to do, I resolved to go for the proverbial long walk in the country. I swiftly discovered that there are two sorts of country walk. One is where you walk along the side of the main road, placing yourself at the mercy of speeding lorries feeling for grip on the damp Tarmac and the slavering dogs in the gardens of roadside properties (it says everything about the people who live out here that with countless acres to choose from, they build next to the highway – my flat off Hackney Road is quieter than any of the villages I visited). The other country walk is the one where you depart the main road for the designated walking paths – which, when the merest moisture settles upon them, degenerate into gurgling quagmires capable of swallowing troops, horses and cannon. Still, there's *all* that lovely fresh air. Not when you're sinking up to your knees in swamp next to a cattle run, there isn't.

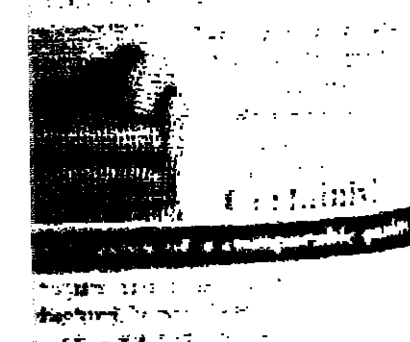
The towns were cute, but insufferably, unbelievably, eye-wateringly, fist-chewingly boring

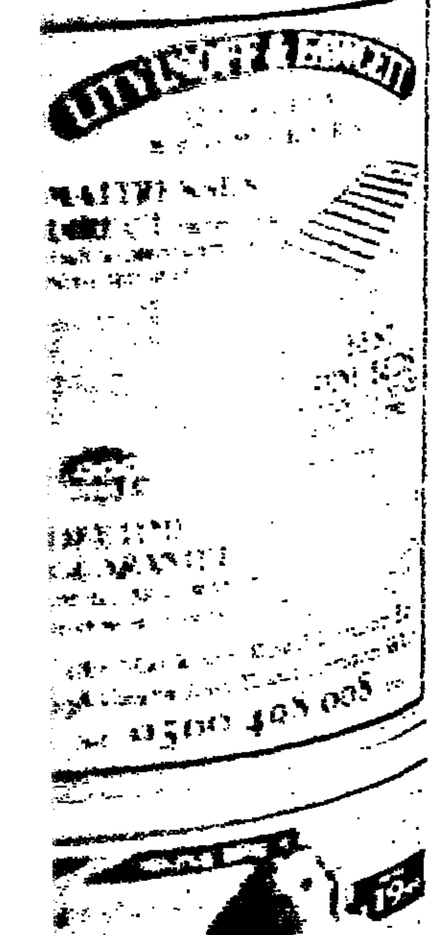
The truth is that I can experience all the joys of country living, such as they are, without leaving London. If I want to look at trees I can go to a park, and should I crave the company of quacking waterfowl and malodorous ruminants, there's a city farm on the next block. To spend time in the country is to forsake film and music, drinkable cappuccino and carbonara sauce that doesn't have tinned corn in it, to wonder whether "Pub open 7pm-9pm" is an advertisement or a local newspaper headline.

When I was hungry, I could not even buy a sandwich. "We close at two o'clock," harrumphed an irritable young man with eyebrows on his cheeks, and informed me that the nearest open restaurant "at this hooooursrrr" was in the next town along the road – a three-mile walk away. I plodded wearily off into the mist, grudgingly grateful for a round trip that would consume at least half of an otherwise agonisingly vacant afternoon.

The country is where our forebears lived when everybody dwelt in mud huts, ate hay and worshipped the sun, and is no place for the enlightened human being. A survey of the great civilisations of history – Carthage, Athens, Rome, Constantinople, Florence, Paris, Vienna, London, Washington – yields one common thread: cities. Cities were created so that man might live a life of comfort and grace, and while it doesn't always work out that way – the train up to the Cotswolds passed through Swindon, for example – we urbanites are at least in with a chance.

This should not be construed as a suggestion that the country does not have a role to play. We have to keep cows, make television melodramas and send tourists somewhere, and our green and pleasant land makes a terrific view out of the window of the train as you glide from the lights and sounds of one bright, bustling centre of culture, commerce and entertainment to another.





The game's up for young Tom

PARK LIFE

BRUCE MILLAR

"DAD," MY son Tom said the other day, "if you were a boy I wouldn't like you."

My immediate reaction was, naturally enough, to feel hurt. But I was also puzzled. Had he found a particularly nasty way of phrasing the old commonplace that you don't choose your family? Or was he trying to tell me something worse, that he liked me only out of duty, because I was his father? So, trying not to betray my feelings, I asked him to expand.

"Well, I know lots of boys who are just like you must have been when you were 11," he explained. "They're all mad about sport – and I hate them."

I knew instantly what he meant – and in that instant I flipped back 30 years to find myself in short trousers, with a worn tennis ball in my pocket, ready to sprint out into the playground as soon as the bell went to mark the end of a lesson. I must have played three or four games of playground football a day, from two-a-side to 20-a-side, and I can still summon the exact configuration of the goals: at one end, the recessed double-door entrance to the school hall, high enough to reward dramatic lofted shots, and at the other the wider but lower metal tank which, I now suppose, must have stored the school's supply of oil.

At that age, everyone slotted neatly into a handful of narrow categories: there were the sports-mad, a group which Tom correctly identified as mine; the swots, their noses always buried in a book; the weird musical types (Tom's own group); and the nonentities who had no particular interest or expertise. My dismissive labelling of the rival groupings was, I'm sure, reciprocated. To the more civilised swots and musicians, the sports-mad must have been sweaty, thuggish, hearty, brain-dead yobs, and worse. I wouldn't go so far as agreeing with Tom that I hated all the boys outside my group; we simply ignored each other, having no common language or activity. Once or twice I have asked Tom what he does in break at school, because I have no conception of how a schoolboy fills up his free time if he doesn't play playing football (the answer, it seems, is that he visits the library or – dread innovation – the IT room).

Tom's little brother's school day, by contrast, is all too easily imagined: football, football, followed by a kick-around on the common with me after school once the evenings get light enough.

Anyway, I piously told Tom that this was an immature and superficial way of categorising people, which he would grow out of in a year or two. By the time I left school, I assured him, most of my friends hated sport every bit as much as he does. I didn't want to complicate matters by explaining that it was a shared taste for teenage rebellion that united the sporties, swots, musicians and nonentities.

In the days that followed this conversation, to my alarm it dawned on me that perhaps I have not completely outgrown the habit of categorising people. When I learnt that a colleague absent from work was not suffering from flu or a domestic crisis with the child-minder, but had fallen from her horse, I was deeply impressed. She was definitely, my 11-year-old self told me, someone to be admired, even if she had never played football in the playground.

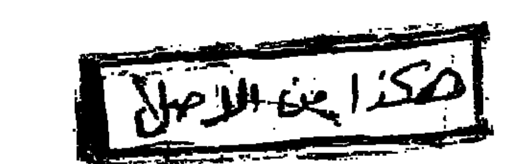
Then, visiting the National Portrait Gallery, I saw a screen belonging to Lord Byron, behind which he must have changed into his nightshirt before jumping into bed with a string of conquests. On one side of this screen the serial seducer, romantic hero and aristocratic revolutionary had glued cut-out prints of his boxing heroes, on the other his favourite actresses.

Suddenly the distant and formidable figure was transformed into the sort of 11-year-old boy who adorns his bedroom wall with posters of George Best and Raquel Welch, or Ronaldo and the Spice Girls.

And what of other figures from history? There have always been two Henry VIIIs: the dashing young courtier who wandered around strumming "Greensleeves" on his lute between games of real tennis, and the hoary old Bluebeard who murdered his way through six wives. The official line is that Henry was driven to the verge of madness by his desperation to sire a son and heir, but I've always thought his decline must have been linked to the gout that ended his healthy tennis playing.

Our habits of mind and prejudices are set when we are young, so I'm sure that Tom will be wary of the sports-obsessed for the rest of his life, just as I feel immediately at ease with sports-lovers and out of my depth in a room full of artists. But I hope that the two of us can be better than friends.

And if anyone tells me that Hitler was a brilliant left-half in his teens, or that Stalin was a junior tennis champion, I simply won't believe them.



Gerald 'Bounce' Gregory

TODAY'S TEENYBOP and rhythm 'n' blues acts may include several vocalists but none (not even Dru Hill or Another Level) are organised along the traditional lines of the doo-wop groups of the Fifties with a lead, one or two tenors, a baritone and, most famously, a bass singer. Gerald "Bounce" Gregory hit the distinctive low notes on the Spaniels' 1950s classic "Goodnite Sweetheart Goodnite".

While the seminal recording was eclipsed by the McGuire Sisters' cover which reached the US Top Ten, film-makers know that the Spaniels' original version gives the true flavour of the period. "Goodnite Sweetheart Goodnite" is thus one of the gems featured on the soundtracks of George Lucas's *American Graffiti* (the original Fifties nostalgia movie of 1973) and Floyd Mutrux's *American Hot Wax* (the 1976 biopic of the American DJ Alan Freed who coined the expression rock 'n' roll). Indeed, over the course of a 25-year career, the Spaniels proved a more versatile and prolific harmony group than the Crests, the Del-Vikings, the Diamonds, the Heartbeats, the Moonglows and the Monotones who faded away into obscurity.

Born in 1934, Gerald Gregory attended the Roosevelt High School in Gary, Indiana, where fellow students nicknamed him "Bounce" for his uncanny ability to make his incredibly low voice resonate around the corridors. Soon, Gregory, Ernest Warren (1st tenor), Willie C. Jackson (2nd tenor) and Opal Courtney Jnr (baritone) were blending their delicate harmonies and emotive singing in the glee club and on street corners. They talked another pupil, the talented vocalist James "Pookie" Hudson, into joining them as lead tenor and named their fledgling vocal ensemble Pookie Hudson and the Hudsonaires.

In 1952, the quintet's performance at a local Christmas talent concert went down a storm, though Gregory's young wife was heard muttering that they sounded like a bunch of dogs. The Spaniels' name stuck; perhaps it was better than the various birds, flowers or makes of cars favoured by the likes of the Ravens, the Laurels or the Edsels.

Further bookings at local hops followed and, in the spring of 1953, the group gave an impromptu a cappella performance in a Gary record store belonging to the DJ Vivian Carter and her husband Jimmy Bracken. The couple had already thought about starting their own label and were so impressed by the outfit that they toyed with the idea of calling their new imprint Spaniel. Eventually, they plumped for the initials of their Christian names and set up VeeJay Records in neighbouring Chicago.

On 4 May 1953, the Spaniels became the first act to record for Vee-Jay, cutting two Hudson-Gregory compositions, "Baby It's You" and "Bounce", at Universal Recording Studio in Chicago. Ironically, they had to settle for the catalogue number Vee-Jay 101 as the bluesman Jimmy Reed jumped the queue. Leased to the Chance label, "Baby It's You" reached the Top Ten in the R&B charts and, in September 1953, the Spaniels recorded two follow-up singles, "The Bells Ring Out/House Cleaning" and the perennial ballad "Goodnite Sweetheart Goodnite".

Written by Hudson and Calvin Carter, Vivian's brother who had joined the company as A&R man, "Goodnite Sweetheart Goodnite" owes much of its appeal to Gregory's basso profundo uttering the immortal duh-duh, dit, duh-duh. In fact, the track is so distinctive because the Spaniels were pioneering a new technique, using two microphones, one picking up the lead while the remaining vocalists gathered around the second.

Dave Marsh, the *Rolling Stone* journalist and compiler of *The Heart of Rock and Soul: the 1001 greatest singles ever made*, considers "Goodnite Sweetheart Goodnite"

> the greatest all-time sign-off song. The first couple thousand times you hear it, the secret seems to be the sweet tenor lead; the next couple thousand, it seems like it must be the harmonies. After that, you realise it's that slow, soloing bass voice, really deep, which makes the record.

Simple yet effective, the Spaniels' cool teen song reached the US Top Thirty in 1954 despite competition from the pop version by the McGuire Sisters. In these segregated times, the vocal trio started the trend of white artists covering R&B hits which snowballed when Pat Boone and Elvis Presley got in on the act.



The Spaniels harmony group, clockwise from the top: Gregory, James 'Pookie' Hudson, Ernest Warren, Willie C. Jackson and Calvin Carter *Michael Ochs / Redferns*

Fellow students nicknamed him 'Bounce' for his ability to make his incredibly low voice resonate around the corridors

The Spaniels should have capitalised on their early success. They played the Apollo Theatre in New York with Joe Turner, toured with the Drifters and even worked tapdancing into their live act. But, try as they might, following up "Goodnite Sweeheart Goodnite" proved a problem. "Let's Make Up" and "You Painted Pictures" were only regional hits and, in 1955, Calvin Carter stepped in briefly to replace Opal Courtney, who had been called up in the army.

Several personnel changes followed, briefly leaving Gerald Gregory at the helm as the sole founding member of a Spaniels line-up which headlined the 1956 VeeJay cavalcade of stars alongside the El-Dorados, the Dells and the Magnificents. Later that year, Hudson rejoined the group now also comprising James "Dimples" Cochran (baritone), Carl Rainge and Donald Porter (both tenors).

The quintet soldiered on, recording many more sides such as the poignant "(You Gave Me) Peace of Mind", the gorgeous "You're Gonna Cry", the nonsensical "Great Googley Moo" and the uptempo "Everyone's Laughing", the group's last pop hit in 1957. Further compounding their run of bad luck, the Ravens turned down the chance to do "The Twist". Sharing the bill in Washington with the Nightingales, a gospel group, Hudson was offered the infectious ditty but passed it on to Hank Ballard, whose version was in turn overshadowed by Chubby Checker's rendition.

Gregory continued with the Ravens until 1960 when "I Know" became their swansong on the VeeJay label. (The first large independent record company owned by black Americans, well before Berry Gordy's Tamla Motown, it went on to release the Beatles' early recordings in North America after Capitol had passed on the option.) The bass singer often rejoined "Pookie" Hudson, who led various line-ups of the Ravens recording for *Parkway, Buddah and North American* (1970). In 1991, they were awarded the Pioneer Award from the Rhythm 'n' Blues Foundation of the Smithsonian Institute.

Gregory last performed with the Ravens in December 1998 but his inimitable bass-line lives on in the original and the myriad versions of "Goodnite Sweetheart Goodnite" by Sha-Na-Na, Chuck Berry, Bing Crosby, Dean Martin and even Mantovani.

PIERRE PERRONE

Gerald Gregory, singer, songwriter; born Gary, Indiana 1934; married; died Gary 12 February 1999.

Professor Charles Shute

CHARLES SHUTE, with his Cambridge University colleague Peter Lewis, created pioneering maps of the cholinergic pathways – the pathways in the brain which carry the chemical acetycholine, which with noradrenaline was thought to influence brain activity – in the rat brain. Their work set a precedent for the creation of maps of a whole range of chemicals within the brain, and thereby placed the emerging discipline of psychopharmacology on a sound footing.

Shute was enigmatic, highly intelligent and, for much of his life, a restless man. For someone like myself who knew him best during his time as a mature scientist, his early life was a mystery. One knew that he had been educated at Eton; the occasional wearing of the tie on formal occasions and the languid voice attested to that. But one was unaware that he had been isolated from his parents since the age of two, and of the startling fact that his mother had married six times.

He entered King's College, Cambridge, as an Exhibitioner in Mathematics, but he read English, and switched to philosophy ("Moral Sciences", as it was called) in his final year, 1939. He was a conscientious objector in the Second World War, and served with the Friends' Ambulance Service, whence arose the interest in medicine.

He then returned to Cambridge as a medical student, completing his course at the Middlesex Hospital in 1946, where he remained for two further years as a surgical resident. National Service with the Royal Army Medical Corps involved specialisation in ear, nose and throat work.

That interest continued when, in 1951, he joined the anatomy department at the London Hospital Medical College where his head of department was the formidable Professor James Dixon Boyd. Shute worked initially with Angus Bellairs on the comparative anatomy of the bones of the jaw and the ear, tracing the evolution of jaw bones into the tiny ossicles of the mammalian middle ear.

The following year, Dixon Boyd moved to Cambridge to become Professor of Anatomy, and Shute went with him.

Medical and veterinary students in the Sixties were mystified at the emphasis placed in elementary anatomy courses on amphibian and reptilian jaw-bones, enthusiastically taught by Shute as if the subject were, in modern terminology, "core-material". It was years before I understood why this recondite stuff had been presented to us: Shute was keen to share his enthusiasms with any audience, especially, perhaps, a captive one.

For many, his enthusiasm was infectious. Research students from the Commonwealth left Cambridge to teach anatomy all over the world; I found it poignant, when visiting Sierra Leone as an external examiner in 1991, to discover medical students in Freetown struggling to remember the names of the reptilian jaw bones that their Professor, the late Adesanya Grillo, must himself have learned from Shute some 35 years earlier.

In the late Fifties, Shute's research moved in a different direction. He teamed up with Peter Lewis, a self-effacing Oxford-trained chemist who had proved a valuable partner to Richard Keynes in elegant experiments on ion movements across the squid nerve fibre. When Lewis came to Anatomy, Dixon Boyd encouraged him to develop new techniques in histochemistry – the study of the localisation of specific chemicals in organic tissues.

Shute and Lewis together developed a method for staining acetylcholinesterase in slices of brain tissue, the enzyme which destroys acetylcholine, the first-discovered neurotransmitter. Shute wrote later: "In student days I was inspired by the work of my teacher and supervisor Dr W. Feldberg on release of acetylcholine by nerve endings on muscle, and since that time I have hoped that cholinergic nerves might also be shown to occur wholly within the central nervous system."

Although Shute himself acknowledged that the initial staining technique was "not completely specific" for cholinergic pathways, the work was later validated when they developed a method for detecting a more specific enzyme concerned in the synthesis of acetycholine.

Shute was keen to break down the barriers between the study of structure and function, both in research and in teaching. This created tensions between himself and colleagues of a more conservative temperament. When, in the early Seventies, as Faculty Board Chairman, he attempted to modernise the medical curriculum (so radically as to bring it to a state that the General Medical Council would now regard as antediluvian), he initially failed to win over the opposition.

He had by then moved to a Chair in Histology in the Physiological Laboratory, where conversations with visual physiologists such as Fergus Campbell sparked an interest in a phenomena involving colour vision, the McCollough Effect, which Shute described as "one of the most extraordinary and mysterious of all visual phenomena". He probed the phenomenon, hoping to establish it as a marker of changing levels of activity in chemically characterised neural pathways.

Again Shute wanted undergraduates to share in his enthusiasms, and what might have been conventional histology classes were dominated by rat brains stained for acetylcholinesterase, together with plentiful demonstrations of his beloved McCollough Effect; students, by then less reticent, would ask, "Do we really have to know this?"

Shute also took an interest in other optical curiosities, and wrote in the journal *Weather* on the "blue moon phenomenon" and "the formation of a glory". These activities all harmonise with Shute's dedication of his monograph *The McCollough Effect* (1979) "to all those who love to observe, measure, calculate and think".

Shute was first married in 1947 to Patricia Doran, who died in 1952. He was then married for 26 years to Wendy Harwood, and they had a son and three daughters. It was an unconventional household – full of strong characters who were often enormous fun, but who also could be a bit of a handful. After a divorce in 1980, he married Gay Robins, who was the Wallis Budge Research Fellow in Egyptology at Christ's College, where Shute had been a Fellow since 1957.

This relationship kindled in Shute an enthusiasm for Egyptology which went far beyond dabbling. The Egyptologist Professor Harry Smith, a Fellow at Christ's in the Sixties, recalls that, after retiring from his Cambridge professorship, "Shute threw himself heart and mind into Gay's Egyptological and art-historical interests."

They collaborated on papers on topics ranging from "human stature as revealed by prehistoric Egyptian skeletons – in which Shute's expert knowledge of human anatomy was crucial – through various aspects of sculpture and painting to the influence of Egyptian Wisdom texts on Greek literature".



Schute: The 'blue moon phenomenon' and other curiosities

Their work on the ancient Egyptian canon of proportion revived Shute's early interest in mathematics, and together, in 1987, they published a new analysis of the arithmetical problems in the famous Rhind Mathematical Papyrus at the British Museum, which has become a standard work.

His wife's appointment to a post in ancient art history at Emory University led to their removal to Atlanta, Georgia, where Shute spent the last 10 years of his life fruitfully and happily conducting tours round the galleries of ancient art at Emory University Museum and collaborating in his wife's researches which, to his joy, led to her promotion to a full professorship in 1998.

To the end, he maintained his dry wit, his incisiveness of mind and exceptional range of interests in the natural sciences and the humanities.

After the move, Charles Shute returned to England only seldom, and my last sight of him was in his seventies walking hand-in-hand with Gay through the streets of Cambridge. He seemed very content.

ALAN FINDLAY

Charles Cameron Donald Shute, histologist and Egyptologist: born London 23 May 1917; otologist, Royal Army Medical Corps 1947-49; Demonstrator and Lecturer in Anatomy, London Hospital Medical College 1951-52; University Demonstrator and Lecturer in Anatomy, Cambridge University 1952-69; Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge 1957-99; Professor of Histology, Department of Physiology, Cambridge University 1969-84 (Emeritus); married 1947 Patricia Cameron (died 1952), 1954 Wendy Harwood (one son, three daughters; marriage dissolved 1980), 1980 Gay Robins; died Atlanta, Georgia 2 January 1999.

Fr Jacques Loew

WHEN FATHER Jacques Loew began work in the docks at Marseilles in 1941, he could little imagine that his example would be followed by hundreds of other French Catholic priests and lead to a reappraisal of the priest's vocation.

His audacious move – he had been sent by his fellow Dominican Father Lebret to study the condition of the working classes, not to join it – spawned the worker priest movement, whose pioneers sought to minister to France's secularised industrial working class. Priests took up work in such places as car factories to experience the everyday life of those they ministered to.

One visitor to Marseilles in 1947 who sought out Loew was a young Polish priest, Father Karol Wojtyla, who was inspired by the new approach to ministry. "Father Loew came to the conclusion that the [Dominican] white habit by itself does not say anything any more today," the future Pope John Paul II wrote on his return. "Living among workers he decided to become one of them." Wojtyla was certain that this "apostolic work" was the only correct way for the French church "to reach its non-believers".

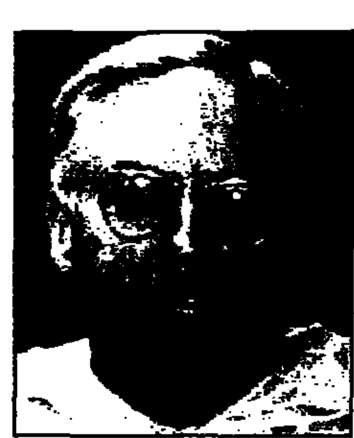
But by the early 1950s the Vatican was becoming alarmed at the worker-priests' growing role in left-wing politics and what it saw as their abandonment of the traditional priestly way of life. In May 1951 Loew sent a long report defending the movement's work to Giovanni Montini, the Vatican's assistant secretary of state and future Pope Paul VI. But Pope Pius XII was unrelenting and brought the experiment to an abrupt halt in 1954.

A disappointed Loew bowed to the Vatican's instruction and quit his job, though he remained convinced that in spite of the problems, the movement had provided an effective pastoral ministry. "Of course a priest can belong to a trade union," he maintained. "This does not mean selling out your priesthood."

He did not abandon his commitment. The following year he established the Saints Peter and Paul Mission to Workers, which continued the mission among the working classes and devoted itself to training priests from among their number. The Dominican Order released Loew from its ranks to commit himself to this work.

Born in 1908, the only child in a family of non-believers of Protestant origin, Loew came to faith when he was 20 and, after first training as a lawyer, decided to enter the Dominican Order in 1934. He was ordained a Dominican priest in 1939. It was in his work at the Marseilles docks that he first had an inkling of what would become his vocation. "It was my contact with flesh-and-blood people that was my real training," he later recalled.

Loew's ministry was not confined to France. After establishing the Saints Peter and Paul Mission he visited Africa before moving to Brazil in 1964 to work in the shanty towns of São Paulo, where he intended to spend the rest of his life. However, by 1969 he was back in Europe and established the School of Faith in the Swiss town of Fribourg. "There was a need to educate the educators of the communities," he explained.



Loew: Spawned the worker-priest movement

By now Loew was well-known for his ministry and for his many books, including *Les dockers de Marseille* (1944), *Un mission prolétarienne* (1946), *Les Cieux ouverts: chronique de la mission Saints Pierre et Paul* (1971) and, in English, *Face to Face with God: the Bible's way to prayer* (1977). In 1971 Pope Paul VI invited him to preach the Lenten retreat in the Vatican.

As old age approached he retreated from the world, following a contemplative life in a succession of religious houses, in Citeaux, Tamié and in 1991, after two and a half years as a hermit in the eastern Pyrenees, he went to live in a community of Trappist nuns at Echourgnac in Périgord. "For my retirement I wanted to share a life of silence and prayer," he said.

Despite his sometimes turbulent life, Loew remained committed to his mission as a priest at the service of the community. "A priest is neither yellow, nor red, nor green, nor violet," he once said. "He is a man of God."

FELIX CORLEY

Jacques Loew, priest: born Clermont-Ferrand, France 1908; ordained priest 1939; died Echourgnac, France 13 February 1999.

Giuseppe Avarna

OF HIS many eccentricities, Giuseppe Avarna's passion for bells will be his best remembered: with affection by his neighbours in the Sicilian hamlet of Gualtieri Sicaminò and with bitterness by his family.

Giuseppe Avarna, Duke of Gualtieri, Marquis of Castania, Baron of Sicaminò, began ringing the bells of the deconsecrated church where he lived more than 20 years ago, after he met and fell in love with Tava Dhaviz, an American air hostess 40 years his junior. He rang them each time he had sex with her, knowing that they would be clearly audible – and infuriating – to his estranged wife, who lived with their three children in the Avarna family castle next door.

The duchess responded to the provocation by suing Avarno for disturbing the peace. In a blaze of publicity, the duke continued the ritual as confirmation of the special privileges he believed he enjoyed as one of the last of Sicily's old-style nobility, the pleasure-loving aristocracy portrayed by Giuseppe Tommasi de Lampedusa in his 1958 masterpiece *Il Gattopardo* (*The Leopard*).

Avarna's family boasts a long and glorious history: his grandfather became a close friend of the Emperor Franz Jozef when posted to Vienna as Italian ambassador, while one great-uncle was the last prime minister of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

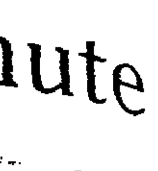
Avarna was born into this old Sicilian family in 1916, but was relieved of most of his huge estate, with 950 hectares being confiscated by the state, in the land reforms of 1955. What the state didn't take, the romantic duke – his mind always more on poetry than practicalities – allowed to slip through his fingers: he sold remaining family assets to finance his jet-set life style, or gave them away to friends. Art works and archives were filched from the castle which the duke had had rebuilt in 1944 from a print of the original building, only to have to build a third version after the second went up in smoke in 1981. In recent years, he lived on the salary of his second wife, who spent all but one week a month working in the United States.

Days before his death, Avarna announced that he intended to run in this spring's Italian presidential elections. Avarna did not, as he well knew, stand a chance. The provocation was, however, typical – he had no qualms about fighting a public court battle recently with one of his sons whom, he argued, had purloined some valuable pieces of family furniture: the case was won on the basis of photographs surreptitiously taken by the duke himself. He was similarly determined to prevent his offspring from selling the family castle to the local council: a court will hear this case in April.

It was not his excesses or eccentricities which led to Avarna's death, but a wood-burning stove he had left on all night to warm his chapel pied-à-terre. All that survived the blaze were the family standard flying from the first floor, and the perimeter walls, on which Avarna had painted his last poem to the second duchess. His cherished family archives met their end with the duke, as did reams of unpublished poetry.

ANNE HANLEY

Giuseppe Averna, Duke of Gualtieri, Marquis of Castania, Baron of Sicaminò, landowner: born 1916; twice married (three sons, one daughter); died Gualtieri Sicaminò, Italy 21 February 1999.



Viola Farber

A FOUNDER member of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, the dancer Viola Farber had a unique presence on stage which Cunningham exploited in several important pieces.

This came not only from her tallness, long limbs and cropped hair, but from a pronounced ranginess in her movement. "She had a big reach, and always looked as though she was grasping space, reaching right out to its edges," says the British choreographer Richard Alston. This quality informed her own choreography, while her passion for dancing made her an outstanding and influential teacher.

She was born in Heidelberg, Germany, in 1931. Aged seven, she emigrated with her family to the United States and six years later became an American citizen. She was a music student at American University, Washington DC; then went to Black Mountain College, North Carolina, where she studied music with Lou Harrison and dance with Katherine Litz. It was here, in 1952, that she met Merce Cunningham and his collaborator, the composer John Cage, during one of Cunningham's visits to teach. The following summer she was one of the dancers who formed the early Merce Cunningham Dance Company.

She was a member of the company for 12 years, producing a vivid impact in roles created for her. In the comic *Antic Meet* (1958) she had a remarkable solo, full of sudden changes of direction and filigree movements of the feet, during which she carried a beautifully fantastical umbrella, opened, with Christmas-tree lights inside, designed by Robert Rauschenberg. Often her parts required her to dance a duet with Cunningham – this despite the fact that partnering Farber, Cunningham said, was like partnering two people simultaneously. "Once she said to me, don't worry, I'll get there, and I said, I *never* worry!"



Farber was one of the dancers who formed the Merce Cunningham Dance Company *Douglas H. Jeffery*

Their duet in the tranquil and mysterious *Nocturne* (1958) was one of the most lyrical and tender he has ever made, an effect enhanced by the vaporous white net material (another Rauschenberg design), which Farber wore like a hood. *Crises* (1960) opened with another Cunningham-Farber duet, during which Farber's body seemed impelled by violent dislocations. At one point the two dancers half-crawled, half-slid along the floor side by side, Cunningham propelling her by pushing her arm. "Her body often had the look of one part being in balance, and the rest extremely off," Cunningham said. "Now and again it was like two persons, another just ahead or behind the first."

Paired (1964) consisted of a duet in which Cunningham and Farber's sequence of events was decided during performance. The events were colour-cued, the cue sheet was off-stage and the dancers had intermittently to smear different coloured paint on each other. "We tried doing it without a cue sheet but couldn't remember what colour referred to what movement and what had been done and what was left to do," Cunningham said. "It was a violent dance. Once she kicked me in the forehead, another time I dropped her head on the floor, and again we cracked heads."

During her years with Cunningham, Farber also danced for other choreographers, including Paul Taylor and Katherine Litz. She left Cunningham in 1965 and formed the Viola Farber Dance Company three years later as a showcase for her own idiosyncratic choreography. Like Cunningham she favoured juxtaposing disparate activities, transforming gesture into a dance language alongside more formal steps.

"My dances report what I see," she once said. "They are my response to the way everything is mixed up together in this world – people and microbes and elephants, cassowary birds." Sometimes she used classical music, sometimes she worked with contemporary composers. (She herself was an accomplished pianist.)

'It was a violent dance. She kicked me in the forehead, I dropped her head on the floor, and again we cracked heads'

She enjoyed high esteem in France where in 1971 she and Jeff Slayton, her dance partner and then husband, won a gold medal at the Ninth International Dance Festival in Paris. Following choreographic commissions from 1977 to 1979 for the Ballet Théâtre Contemporain in Angers and the Ballet Théâtre Français in Nancy, she became artistic director of Anger's Centre National de Danse Contemporaine in 1981. There she formed a company of 16 dancers, for whom she made a dozen pieces. She also established a centre in Paris for training dance teachers.

From 1984 to 1987 she lived in London, teaching at London Contemporary Dance School; in 1988 she returned to the United States to become the director of dance at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York. But she continued to work as a guest teacher and choreographer for companies in the US and abroad, especially in France.

In 1992 she collaborated with the French choreographer Mathilde Monnier on a piece, *Ainsi de suite*, shown in Avignon, Paris and Brest. Recently the French government appointed her Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. Her last stage appearance was in 1995, in a duet called *Threestep (Shipwreck)*, created with Ralph Lemon, a former student, for his company's season at the Joyce Theatre in New York.

Her formidable achievement in later years was as a teacher. "She was one of the greats," says Richard Alston. "She had a huge following and when I was a student in New York her classes were packed. She had a huge influence on me and Siobhan Davies [the British choreographer]. We were both thunderstruck by her classes. I decided to change my dancing and never to do Graham technique again. Really, she changed my life."

NADINE MEISNER

Viola Farber, dancer, choreographer, teacher: born Heidelberg, Germany 25 February 1931; founder member, Merce Cunningham Dance Company 1953-65; founder member, Viola Farber Dance Company 1968-85; artistic director, Centre National de Danse Contemporaine, Angers 1981-83; teacher, London Contemporary Dance School 1984-87; director, dance department, Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville 1988-99; married 1971 Jeff Slayton (marriage dissolved 1980); died New York 24 December 1998.

MEDICAL NOTES

THOMAS DORMANDY

Youth goes pale and spectre thin, then dies

COMPARED TO political, economic, social, cultural and even climatic history, all tirelessly mined by professional historians, little is known about the diseases of the past. Yet they affected the lives of millions in two different ways. The diseases themselves often changed historic events. But more pervasive, though even more difficult to document, were the widely perceived images of the illnesses, some close reflections of reality, others recognisable but transformed by popular imagination.

Of no affliction was this more true than of tuberculosis. Though undoubtedly ancient – evidence of it has been discovered in prehistoric remains and Egyptian mummies – as a great killer it burst on to the European scene with the industrial revolution. The England of Keats, Shelley, and the boy Dickens led the way, as she did in steam power and manufacturing industry, but soon the images of consumption were instantly recognisable everywhere.

The disease was often described as "white" – the white plague, the white death, the white killer – and this was more than a reference to the pallor associated with chronic blood loss.

To the European middle classes, who barely existed at the beginning of the tuberculous century and very nearly ruled the world by the end of it, tuberculosis posed an ethical conundrum. The illnesses and deaths of old people could be represented as natural phenomena, essential for the survival of the species. Illnesses in middle age too could sometimes be seen as just retributions for profligate or unwise living, the sins of the fathers being visited on the sons.

At the other extreme of life, a horrendous infant mortality was accepted as a law of nature. But tuberculosis, slowly killing the young in their prime – "where youth goes pale, and spectre thin, and dies" – crossing social barriers as well as national frontiers, needed a moral explanation. It became the image of sacrifice and atonement, Napoleon's son, the Eaglet, did not simply die in his gilded Austrian cage; he was consciously atoning for the bloodshed and suffering caused by his father.

But there was also a complementary image – or several complementary images. "*Omnis phthisicus alax*" – every tuberculous a lecher – was an oft-quoted saying; and there was truth in that too. The disease struck down and often confined to bed, house or sanatorium exile young people in their procreative as well as their creative flowering, longing to perform, yet able only to dream. Watteau's infinitely sad *Departure for Cythera*, the island where Venus taught her acolytes the art of love, is a pictorial elegy to lost sexual prowess. The artist died two years later, aged 36.

But above all, tuberculosis came to symbolise the longing for the unattainable – for a cure in the case of patients (like Katherine Mansfield, Franz Kafka or Robert Louis Stevenson) or simply for the kind of total happiness that is granted only rarely and then only for a few fleeting seconds to ordinary mortals.

The "message" of Chekhov's last and greatest plays – all the pining and quiet desperation – sometimes puzzles literary critics: why could the three sisters, daughters of the valiant General Prozorov, not do the practical and the obvious and simply take the train to Moscow? After *Ivanov* tuberculosis is never mentioned by name in any of the texts, just as it was rarely mentioned in the correspondence of sanatorium patients; but pining was exactly what Chekhov himself and countless fellow tuberculous did in their remote Yaltas; and quiet desperation was their destiny.

But even in desperation there was always hope and, as they went on hoping to the end, and often in a breathless hurry, an astonishing number created some of the greatest works of art, music and literature.

Thomas Dormandy is the author of 'The White Death: a history of tuberculosis', (Hambledon Press, £19.99)

Violent hatred and the soft suburban soul

FAITH & REASON

PAUL HANDLEY

The response of the churches to the Lawrence report must confront a terrible reality which for too long has been utterly alien to them

THIS COLUMN in this week was always going to be about the Stephen Lawrence report. I had started jotting down a few notes beforehand, looking for something fresh among the usual church platitudes about racial prejudice. Then a copy of the report arrived: two pink telephone directories full of violent hatred and bureaucratic excuses. And now I'm writing something quite different.

What I had expected to say was that racism was indeed deeply ingrained in our society, and that this was hardly surprising, given human nature and the slow speed at which communities adapt themselves to new influences. But all this seemed hopelessly irenic when I started to look at the report. I read it in unusual circumstances: sitting in the audience of a charity concert at which my daughter was singing, held in a church decked with Lenten banners: "Have mercy on us Lord, for we have sinned." It seemed like a set-up, but the answer came out wrong. No, we haven't sinned, at least, not like that.

As has now been widely reported, the appendix to Sir William Macpherson's report contains 56 pages of a transcript from a secret surveillance video made of four of the five prime suspects. As they play with their knives, stabbing and chopping at the furniture, Neil Acourt, Gary Dobson, Luke Knight, David Norris and two other friends fill page after page with vile, raw, racist diatribe. One example suffices, from Acourt: "I reckon that every nigger should be chopped up, mate, and they should be left with nothing but fucking stumps." Nothing has been proved against these men, but as Macpherson says, "If these suspects were not involved there must have been five or six almost identical young thugs at large on the night of 22 April 1993."

I must have known that such people existed. I worked among them in an East End market. I know logically that racist attacks must have perpetrators. When I lived in Hackney, I would occasionally have to cross roads to avoid gangs of such people. I had even read excerpts from that videotape before now. And yet, reading through the whole transcript, I feel as if, uncomprehending, I am encountering an alien people for the first time, certainly more alien than those people I know from ethnic minorities. Soft and suburban like the majority of British Christians, I have to admit to losing touch with this particular sub-culture. I don't want to encounter it, of course, but my religion insists that I first understand and second, do what I can to help the victims of prejudice and hatred in my world.

Another section of the report that made an impact on me was the testimony of Duwayne Brooks, Stephen's friend who witnessed the attack. I live safely in a country where the first people at the scene of a stabbing "sort of shimmied away" because they thought the victim's friend might be going to rob them; where none of the police officers attempted any first aid on the victim, despite not knowing whether his wounds were fatal or not; where Brooks, so nearly a victim himself, was not asked whether he had been hurt, but was questioned instead about any weapons he might have on him; where his information about where the gang had run off to was ignored until it was too late. It has, of course, been denied that any of this treatment was because Lawrence and Brooks were black. All that can be said is that this story is familiar to other black people who have had contact with the police, not so familiar to whites.

There will be time enough later on to do the individual soul-searching that middle-class liberals and their churches do when challenged with racism. The comparison with drinking might well be accurate: that my small sherries of discrimination contribute in some way to the violent, drunken, racist wreck in the underpass. But for the moment that seems self-indulgent. To quote Macpherson, the sub-culture of violent racism must be tackled head on. "A high priority must be for society to purge itself of such racist prejudice and violence."

The talk has been that racism can reside in the structures of an organisation though I suspect that it is, in large part, a convenient euphemism for the racist attitudes inherent in some of the people in institutions. In the Macpherson report, it is a way of apportioning a racist cause to some of the incompetence in the police handling of Stephen Lawrence's murder, without directly accusing any of the individual police officers of racist attitudes and motivation (on which the testimony of Neville and Doreen Lawrence is more pointed). But this goes beyond the notion of racism being institutionalised within the assumptions and organisation of an institution. A different phrase is needed, something like corporate racism, or communal racism, to describe the chief sin of which we are all truly guilty: our failure to identify and root out the extreme and corrosive form of violent racism demonstrated by the Acourts and their friends.

This is why the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary were right to respond so quickly and so firmly to the report's findings, and why it is so vital to purge the police force of any racist elements, so that it can carry out its new anti-discriminatory tasks with vigour and the confidence of the black community. There is a way to go.

GAZETTE

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

MEMORIAL SERVICES

TANNER: A Memorial Service for Professor Tony Tanner will be held in King's College Chapel, Cambridge, at 2.30pm on Saturday 6 March 1999.

IN MEMORIAM

NANDI: Always in our thoughts, Rosemarie Nandi, died 28 February 1998, and Bankim Chandra Nandi, died 15 December 1990. M.B., P.A., S.W., P.N.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra).

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. TOMORROW: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 10am; No 7 Company Coldstream Guards mounts the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Coldstream Guards.

BIRTHDAYS

TODAY: Mr Frank Allaun, journalist and former MP, 86; Mr Paddy Ashdown MP, leader, Liberal Democrats, 58; Sir Michael Butler, former diplomat, and chairman, Pathway Group, 72; Mr Peter De Vries, novelist, 89; Sir Peter Emery MP, 73; Viscount Head, former racehorse trainer, 62; Professor Brian Heap, Master, St Edmund's College, Cambridge, 64; Mr Alan Jinkinson, former general secretary, Unison, 64; Mrs Fiona Jones MP, 42; Mr Mervyn Jones, writer, 77; Mr Edward Lucie-Smith, poet and art critic, 66; Mr Ian McGarry, general secretary, British Actors' Equity Association, 58; Professor Sir Donald Mackay, chairman, Pieda plc, 62; Mr Geoffrey Maitland Smith, chairman, Hammerson plc, 66; Mr George Marwick, Lord-Lieutenant of Orkney, 67; Mr Ralph Nader, writer and consumer activist, 65; Rabbi Julia Neuberger, 49; Mr Graeme Pollock, former South African cricketer, 55; Mr Alberto Remedios, operatic tenor, 64; Mr Gene Sarazen, golfer, 97; Professor Roger Scruton, writer and philosopher, 55; Mr Magnus MacDonald Shearer, former Lord-Lieutenant of Shetland, 75; Dame Antoinette Sibley, prima ballerina, 60; Sir John Skehel, director, National Institute for Medical Research, 58; Sir Andrew Sloan, former Chief Constable of Strathclyde, 68; Mr Timothy Spall, actor, 42; Mr Kenzo Takada, Japanese fashion designer, 60; Miss Elizabeth Taylor, actress, 67; Air Chief Marshal Sir Sandy Wilson, former Air Member for Personnel and Air Aide-de-Camp to the Queen, 58; Miss Joanne Woodward, actress, 68; Lord Young of Graffham, chairman, Young Associates, 67.

TOMORROW: Mr Peter Alliss, golfer and television commentator, 68; Sir Philip Bailhache, Bailiff of Jersey, 53; Sir Peter Baxendell, former chairman, Hawker Siddeley, 74; Miss Stephanie Beacham, actress, 50; Mr Alfred Burke, actor, 81; Mr John Carson, actor, 72; Mr Robin Cook MP, Foreign Secretary, 53; Maj-Gen Edwin Foxton, 85; Lord Garel-Jones, former MP, 58; Mrs Helen Grindrod QC, former Crown Court Recorder, 63; Sir Anthony Havelock-Allan, film producer, 95; Admiral Sir Peter Herbert, former chairman, SSAFA, 70; Maj-Gen Michael Hobbs, retiring director, Duke of Edinburgh's Award, 62; Professor Maxwell Irvine, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Birmingham University, 60; Professor Thomas Kempner, business studies authority, 69; Mr Jeremy Lancaster, chairman and managing director, Wolseley-Hughes, 63; Mr Barry McGuigan, boxer, 38; Mr George Malcolm, musician, 82; Mr Martin Marriott, former Headmaster, Canford School, 67; Mr Brian Moore, football commentator, 67; Mr Robin Phillips, actor and director, 57; Mr Peter Stothard, editor of *The Times*, 48; Sir John Swire, Honorary President, John Swire and Sons, 72; Sir Brian Urquhart, former United Nations official, 80; Vice-Admiral Sir James Weatherall, Marshal of the Diplomatic Corps, 63; Sir Michael Young-Herries, former chairman, Royal Bank of Scotland Group, 76.

ANNIVERSARIES

TODAY
Births: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, poet, 1807; Dame Ellen Alicia Terry, actress, 1847; Enrico Caruso, operatic tenor, 1873; John Ernst Steinbeck, writer, 1902. Deaths: Joan Greenwood, actress, 1987; Lillian Gish (Lillian Diana de Guiche), actress, 1993. On this day: the British Labour Party was founded, with Ramsay MacDonald as secretary, 1900; the Gulf War ended after Iraqi troops retreated and Kuwait was liberated, 1991. Today is the Feast Day of St Alnoth, St Anne Line, St Baldomerius or Galmier, St Gabriel Possenti, St Herefrith of Louth, St John of Gorze, Saints Julian, Cronion, Besas and Eunus, St Leander of Seville and St Thalelaeus the Hermit.

TOMORROW
Births: Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, essayist, 1533; Sir John Tenniel, artist and illustrator, 1820; Vicente Minelli, film director, 1913. Deaths: Francisco de Zurbaran, painter, 1664; Henry James, novelist, 1916; Ruby Ethel Keeler, actress, singer and dancer, 1993. On this day: John Wesley signed the "deed of declaration" of the Wesleyan faith, 1784; the last British troops left India, 1948. Tomorrow is the Feast Day of The Martyrs of the Plague at Alexandria, St Hilarus, pope, St Lupicinus, St Oswald of Worcester, St Proterius and St Romanus.

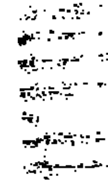
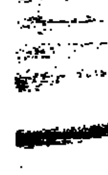
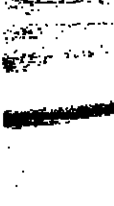
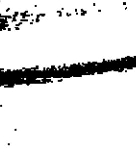
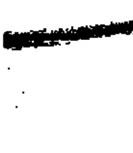
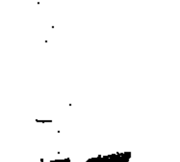
SIR WILLIAM MARS-JONES

A Service of Thanksgiving for the Life and Work of Sir William Mars-Jones MBE will be held in Gray's Inn Chapel, London WC1, on Monday 1 March 1999 at 5pm.

PETER COTES

A Memorial Meeting to celebrate the life of Peter Cotes (1912-1998), Theatre Director and Writer, will be held at 3pm on Monday 22 March 1999, at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. All invited.

Post Gazette announcements to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, telephone 0171-293 2012 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2011) or fax to 0171-293 2010. Please give a daytime telephone number.

Heart of darkness

Klaus Maria Brandauer is in London to play the architect Albert Speer. And it's not the actor's first brush with the Nazi era. What's the attraction? By **Daniel Rosenthal**

He was a man of enormous talent but I cannot tell you what the talent was." That's Klaus Maria Brandauer on Albert Speer, the much-hated Nazi whom he is about to play at the Almeida Theatre. Brandauer's own talent is enormous, yet equally difficult to pin down. He gravitates naturally towards characters *in extremis*, people on the brink of murder, execution or suicide. His performances are underpinned by a clear intelligence, but there's also an indefinable, elusive quality that he describes vaguely as "vision".

Speer marks Brandauer's English-language stage début. Set in East Berlin in 1980, this compelling slice of faction by the Argentine-born writer Esther Vilar presents Hitler's organisational mastermind at the age of 75. He has been brought back to Berlin's Academy of Arts where, from 1938 to 1941, he and the Führer planned their monumental capital city, Germania. A fictional Stasi official, Hans Bauer, grills Speer about his role in the war and the Holocaust, then offers him a chance to return to the political big time.

In the play's remarkable première, held in January last year in the Berlin Academy hall used by Speer and Hitler, Brandauer played Bauer. That role now goes to Sven Eric Bechtols, and Brandauer, who also directs, has "the challenge of seeing this subject from the other side".

He has read several biographies alongside Vilar's version of the man, but the research has left him completely in doubt. "Speer was one of the men responsible for that murderous system," he says, after a 10-hour rehearsal, "yet I have listened to hours of taped interviews he gave in the late Sixties and his voice sounds so sympathetic – very simple and open." He would love to have met Speer, to judge for himself whether the man who consistently denied prior knowledge of the Final Solution "was really a genius or a liar".

Millions more people know Brandauer as Sean Connery's megalomaniac foe in *Never Say Never Again*, or Meryl Streep's brutish husband in *Out of Africa*, than will ever see *Speer*. But for him to be playing a figure from the Third Reich seems utterly appropriate if you find it difficult to picture him in character unless it is to a background "colour" that includes swastikas and Aryan thugs.

> *'I hope I won't be misunderstood but to deal with such extreme situations as an actor is fantastic'*

In *Mephisto*, the Oscar-winning drama that first brought his restless, magnetic presence to an international audience, he shone as an actor who abandons his anti-Fascist principles to further his stage ambitions in Hitler's Germany. His title role in *Hanussen* was as a clairvoyant Austrian soldier murdered by Brownshirts when his predictions are no longer of use to the Nazi propaganda machine. For his directing début, *Seven Minutes*, he cast himself as Georg Elser, the itinerant craftsman who narrowly failed to assassinate Hitler in 1939. For *Kindergarten*, the Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko, a close friend, persuaded him to play a Second World War German army officer. There can be no other actor so closely associated with that dark phase of history.

On *Mephisto*, *Hanussen*, and *Colonel Redl* (as the bisexual Jew who became a turn-of-the-century intelligence chief), he collaborated with the Budapest-born director Istvan Szabo. During the Eighties they were cinema's two-man Austro-Hungarian empire, producing historical drama at its finest: brisk and unsettling. One of their goals, says Brandauer, was to demonstrate "how it is impossible for an individual to live in society without compromise". Where better to illustrate that argument than a Germany where, if you did not want to toe the party line, you fled, dissembled or died.

Hanussen and *Seven Minutes* placed Brandauer's character in almost unwatchable scenes. Hanussen is blindfolded and made to crow like a cockerel before he is murdered; thugs beat Georg Elser to the ground and urinate over his face when he fails to return their "Heil Hitler!". "I hope I won't be misunderstood," he says, "but to deal with such extreme situations as an actor is fantastic."

Brandauer was born too late to have had to stand against Hitler, a fortnight after D-Day, in Altaussee, an Alpine village near Salzburg: "1,800 inhabitants, 500 cows, 2,000 chickens, eight months of snow". Scene one of a Brandauer biopic would show a van containing a mobile cinema pulling into Altaussee for its monthly visit. The 13-year-old Klaus used to slip into the back room at the inn where the films were shown (he breaks into a rousing chorus of Altaussee men ordering beer and sausages to re-create the background), to watch Bardot and other images that "were not really permitted" for the village's children. "I'm not sure if the mobile cinema was the reason I first decided to become an actor," he says, "but it was quite something."

"I did not suffer because of the war. But my grandfather had been imprisoned for being a social democrat and my father had fought as an *Obergefreite* [lance-corporal]. I remember listening to them talking about their experiences in the war and so, luckily, I realised very young what could happen to individuals during conflict." At 18, he married an Altaussee girl, Karin Müller, who became one of Austria's most respected television directors. She died of cancer in 1992, aged 47, and he has not remarried. Their composer son Christian, now 36, scored a number of his mother's films, and his father's second feature as a director, *Mario and the Magician* (yet another tale of individuals caught up in the rise of Fascism, this time in Twenties Italy).

In the Seventies, performances in Molière, Shakespeare and Goethe established Brandauer as Austria's finest stage actor, yet he was largely unknown beyond what he calls "this very small country which, because it uses the German language, is a little bit swallowed up by Germany".

That all changed with *Mephisto*. Szabo collected the Oscar for Best Foreign Film and Brandauer won Best Actor at Cannes, which gave him the chance to chew scenery as Maximilian Largo in Connery's 1983 return to Bond, *Never Say Never Again*. "It was paradise! The aim is just to entertain people. For two hours you make them very happy. It's very unjust that you have a much better quality of life if you do films like that, rather than *Colonel Redl*. But I'm very grateful, because in the shadow of Connery I got a little attention and so maybe more people went to my and Istvan's films."

After directing the Bond, Irvin Kershner said: "Klaus is an intellectual and you *don't* find *that* very often with actors." Brandauer, however, rejects this label, suggesting that a few after-hours conversations about Russian literature and Hieronymus Bosch must have given "Kersh" an exaggerated impression of his intellect.

In the mid-Eighties, had it not been for the simultaneous rise of Arnold Schwarzenegger, Brandauer would have become Austria's most famous screen export. His performance in *Out of Africa* brought him a Best Supporting Actor Oscar nomination (he lost out to Don Ameche's rejuvenated seventy-something in *Cocoon*), and his brief appearance as a dissident was the best thing in *The Russia House*. His muscular voice is a significant part of his armoury, but he would have been a star in the silent era. The only contemporary actor who can match him for neurotic intensity is Christopher Walken, who, coincidentally, has been cast as a Bond villain and, in *The Dead Zone*, a clairvoyant.

Brandauer's English does not, you suspect, allow him to answer questions as fluently as he might like, but the sometimes faltering delivery cannot dilute the charm. When he talks about a satisfying role, he smiles like a fox with the keys to the chicken coop. You can imagine him inspiring his students at Vienna's Max Reinhardt Seminar, where he leads intensive two-week drama workshops. "I take the teaching very seriously," he says, "and it makes me very happy, because this way I can keep myself young." What if a student wants to act like Brandauer? "For a moment I'm a little happy, but I make it clear that this is impossible. He can only watch me, take that as an example, and then find the one way for him to express himself."

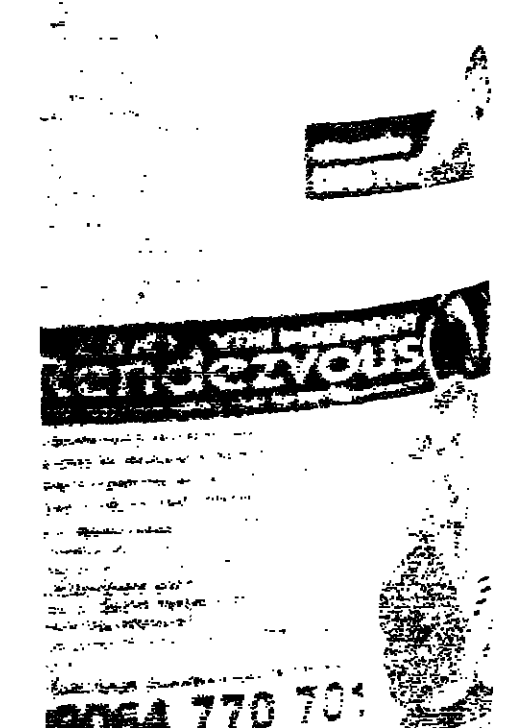
He will be back in Vienna in the autumn, playing Cyrano de Bergerac, by which time we may have seen him speaking French in a recently completed Rembrandt biopic. Brandauer as Cyrano? Perfect casting: a hero bursting with energy, doomed not to get the girl. Brandauer as Rembrandt is less obvious: he's too charismatic to seem old, but he's definitely a master.

'Speer' is at the Almeida Theatre, London N1 (0171-359 4404), from Thursday until 27 March

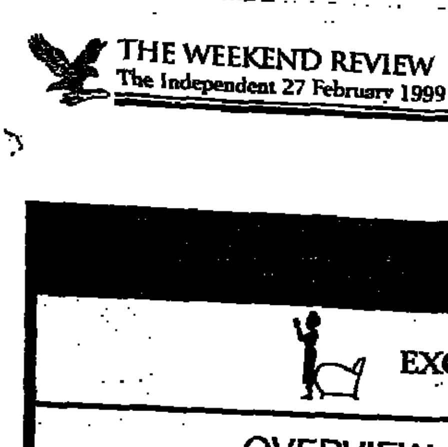


Klaus Maria Brandauer: 'Luckily, I realised very young what could happen to individuals during conflict' *Tom Craig*









THE WEEK IN REVIEW

BY FIONA STURGES





	OVERVIEW	CRITICAL VIEW	OUR VIEW	ON VIEW
THE FILM THE THIN RED LINE	**Terrence Malick returns to the screen after a 20-year absence with a story adapted from James Jones's novel about the American assault on Guadalcanal in 1942.**	"On the one hand it's profoundly strange and luminously beautiful; on the other, it's rambling, incoherent, perverse and defiantly insular," revealed Anthony Quinn. "Grandiloquent beyond belief," declared the *Financial Times*, adding, "*The Thin Red Line* is fabulous to look at. It could have been made by God." *The Guardian* considered it "the most poetic study of foliage ever from Hollywood," while the *Evening Standard* found it "one of the most perplexing films of the year." "A masterpiece, a stunning piece of work from one of cinema's true visionaries," gushed *Time Out*. "Eerily beautiful," wrote *The Express*. "Pretentious codswallop," spluttered the *Daily Mail*.	This picture is light years from the moralising nature of *Saving Private Ryan*, but Mallick forsakes clarity in favour of psychological rambling. Not quite the grand comeback that we'd expected.	*The Thin Red Line* is on general release, cert 15, 170 minutes
THE EXHIBITION JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS	**The National Portrait Gallery sets out to reassess the later career of the co-founder of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, John Everett Millais.**	"Boring: this is the most prominent aspect of Millais' late work. You may say 'stuffy' or 'twee', but the extreme boringness of it is the decisive factor," remarked Tom Lubbock. "These later pictures work well as dignified likenesses of Victorian worthies, beauties and cuties, but they can't be compared to the early work," declared the *Daily Telegraph*, while the *Evening Standard* wrote: "Despite their imposing sense of purpose and their undoubted technical chunkiness, the portraits feel like the painting of duty." "Millais turned out to be one of the finest portraitists we have ever had, as this exhibition reveals," disagreed the *Daily Mail*.	In proving what we already knew – that Millais sold out to the establishment after his Pre-Raphaelite days – the organisers have put on a show that promotes the cause of dullness.	Millais is at the National Portrait Gallery until 6 June (Mon-Sat 10am-6pm, Sun 12-6pm). For bookings and enquiries call 0171-306 0055
THE ALBUM UNDERWORLD	**Following up their acclaimed *Second Toughest of the Infants*, released in 1996, the dance trio Underworld return with a third album, *Beaucoup Fish*.**	"This album is by some distance their least satisfying, representing neither a revolutionary advance beyond previous releases, nor a significant refinement of their techniques," noted Andy Gill. "A familiar blend of hip-hop, funk, techno and psychedelia, but it also features too many shapeless meandering tracks," moaned the *Daily Mail*. "*Beaucoup Fish* is more of the glorious same," declared *Time Out*. "An emotional sweep rich enough to make you feel like you're in a film even when your life is at its least cinematic," pronounced *The Face*, while *The Times* declared: "Despite its sinews of rhythmic steel, this is an album with a heart of glass."	Those looking for the return of Underworld to the forefront of dance music will be disappointed. The understated soundscapes make this one of Underworld's most low-key records yet.	*Beaucoup Fish* (V2) will be available from record shops on Monday. Underworld will be touring from Tues (Wolverhampton) until 13 March (Brixton Academy)
THE DANCE CARMEN	**The world's most famous cigarette-packer finds herself in present-day South America in Didy Veldman's production with the Northern Ballet Theatre.**	"Veldman presents a fresh and entirely believable *Carmen* whose transposition to modern-day South America is a stroke of inspiration," wrote Nadine Neisner, continuing: "As for the anti-heroine herself, Veldman's depiction and Charlotte Broom's enactment fuse potently and realistically." "The staging is excellent, the problem is the choreography which, despite its plain-spoken energy, does not show us a full-blooded tale of fatal attraction," grumbled *The Times*. "The greatest attribute is the choreography, which flows beautifully and is full of invention," trilled *The Stage*. "A powerful and bright new show," cried *The Daily Telegraph*.	By taking the action to South America, Veldman offers a fresh slant on this well-trodden work while Charlotte Broom's unkempt Carmen gives a memorably sensual performance.	Tonight is the last performance of the Northern Ballet Theatre's *Carmen* at the Leeds Grand Theatre. For tickets call 0113-222 6222
THE TV PROGRAMME BIRTHS, MARRIAGES AND DEATHS	**BBC2's comedy-drama follows the fortunes of Alan (Ray Winstone), Terry (Mark Strong) and Graham (Phil Davis) as they indulge in an act of schoolboy vengeance.**	"The outward richness and strangeness emphasised the unfamiliar, dislocating tone of Tony Grounds' script. Jokes may have been set up, but the abundance of the production killed the humour," observed Robert Hanks. "Not even Ray Winstone could rescue *Births, Marriages and Deaths*. These people ring as true as *Trumpton*," spat *The Sun*, while the *Daily Record* decided: "The actors' menacing image was all gloss with no substance." "A work of immense style and intensity," sang the *Daily Mail*. "A little bit *Reservoir Dogs*, a little bit *Blues Brothers*, a little bit early Michael Caine," explained *The Times*. "So slick you could go skating on it."	In spite of its quality cast, smart suits and slick camerawork, *Births, Marriages and Deaths* proves a predictable and only mildly diverting drama series.	*Births, Marriages and Deaths* continues next Monday evening at 9pm, BBC2

EXIT POLL

GIACOMO COSTA
PHOTOLOGY
LONDON

VIRGINIA WOODS-JACKS
28, photographer, London
I found the work very impressive, and it has been really interesting to see this style. I find it innovative, claustrophobic and peaceful; it is a whole mixture of things. The work is cutting-edge and contemporary. And it is nice to see a different exhibition for a change: something I have never seen before.

ASHLEY RUDOLPH
26, teacher, London
I find the concrete ones particularly interesting, because they are quite strong and contemporary. I found the collage of buildings fascinating, perhaps because it is done with digital photography. I think the digital side has worked pretty well, when it often doesn't quite gel. Here, it has been used sensitively.

ROGER DECKKER
37, photographer, London
I am into architecture, so his work appeals to me. Especially the clustering of the blocks of flats. I like the way the planes intersect; some are clean cityscapes, with empty streets, but the layer upon layer represents a dirtiness, and the ugliness of the architecture. The digital work is nice, simple, and not over-obvious.

KAREEN STROHMENGER
19, student, London
They are like two different worlds put together. There are contemplative photographs, such as the one with the long sea wall and sea, and also busy city environments. I prefer the city photographs because they really give you an idea of big houses and how cities are getting more and more crowded.

Smash splash ding-dong

FILM SCORE

EISENSTEIN'S STRIKE/ ALLOY ORCHESTRA
HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
RITZY CINEMA, LONDON

OVER TO one side of the cinema screen lurked a clutter of instruments and drums, plus a jolly rig festooned with bits of metal and a chrome lavatory seat. I hoped the musicians would not turn out to be piss-artists. But perhaps the generalised metallic fetish explained why this trio of silent-film accompanists from Boston call themselves the Alloy Orchestra. Tonight they were playing their new score to Eisenstein's *Strike*, the 1924 film about a group of factory workers taking on the bloated might of capitalism, screened in a fabulously crisp new print

The keyboard player sat down and diffidently inserted a pair of ear-plugs before nodding at his colleagues; true to the film's title, they went on to spend a lot of time striking things with sticks. Martial snare-drum, chaotic pots and pans, fat old timpani; there was little respite from the massive drum frenzy, and though this was impressive for the opening scenes in the factory, I began to wonder how much the Alloy boys had left in reserve for a finale

Most of the non-banging content, meanwhile, was handled heroically by the hearing-impaired keyboard player. His brass samples were tragically farty, there was a silly choir "Ooh" sound, and he couldn't be expected to overcome the problem that anyone with only two hands cannot play a properly orchestrated string ensemble on the keyboard. Nevertheless, the first few themes were splendidly dark omens, riffs that ebbed and flowed in time with the film's editing.

Most of the time, the compositions were inventively illustrative, although the music seemed always to offer external précis across the length of a scene, lacking the ambition to peer into characters' souls or work creatively against the grain of the visual narrative. Adding a lovely, accordion-led dance tune (in which the percussion contributed a memorable final-bar hook of smash splash ding-dong), a pastoral piano melody for bucolic scenes of the proles at rest, a bowed saw for looming peril and some avant-garde clarinet squeaking (just for a laugh) brought much-needed variation to later parts of the film.

The vexed question of when to synchronise a sound exactly to a picture presents even more problems to a live band, since the timing inevitably strays. The Alloys chose to provide sound effects for a telephone, a steam whistle and various breakages, but the logic was inconsistent. Why these when you don't have a speech soundtrack? And if these, why not horses' hooves or gunshots?

Yet by the time of the shattering, murderous climax, the crashing insistence of the drums and the tumescent melodrama of the strings had plugged beautifully into Eisenstein's own tempo, and the film's unnerving and precipitate end left behind a clangorous, mournful silence.

STEVEN POOLE

There will be one more performance at the Ritzy, London SW2, tomorrow at 5pm. Booking: 0181-563 0233



'Strike': screened in a crisp new print, with accompaniment by the Alloy Orchestra

Good karma in the Catskills

NEW YORK DIARY



ALISSA QUART

FIFTY YEARS ago, New Yorkers summered at Catskills hotels famous for their ad-lib comedy, dancing lessons and borsch (the Borsch Belt). Those hotels are almost all gone now, except for three that were reincarnated as an ashram: the headquarters of the Siddha Yoga Dharma Association (SYDA).

Today, thousands spend their summers at the former Gilbert, Windsor and Brickman hotels. They are followers of the charismatic Gurumayi. Chanting and meditation have replaced the Catskills hotels' former prerequisite, insulting humour. And celibacy has supplanted the Jewish middle-class mating rituals of mid-century.

Now, you wander into SYDA looking for shaktipat, or ecstatic transmission, from the realised guru or a follower. Then, young men and women came to the hotels looking for "a catch". In the Thirties and Forties, predominantly Jewish New Yorkers listened to so-called funnymen such as Jerry Lewis and Danny Kaye pelt the audience with quips such as "It says here the world is getting smaller every day. So how come it takes Papa longer to get home every night?" and "The food is terrible. And the portions are too small." Now the ashram's guests spend their evenings smiling, though no one is telling jokes.

The hotels' visitors were a good deal less religious then than SYDA's minions are today. The Brickman hotel's owner once said: "Either you're serious about your religion or you're not and the place you're at doesn't change it." Today, photos of SYDA's lovely Gurumayi cover the walls. Her eyes are always gleaming, her fashionable hats are cocked to the side and her smiles are movie-star enigmatic.

Gurumayi has replaced not only her guru, Swami Muktananda, but also the hotels' old gurus – the tummlers. Tummlers, or social directors, led young guests (and their parents) through the day's activities – swimming, callisthenics, amateur nights and beef brisket dinners. Today, SYDA's herbivores are apparently atoning for their predecessors' chicken feasts. Many of the new guests are still New Yorkers – one regular SYDA visitor calls the ashram "a happy New York City".

Economically depressed Sullivan County has never revived economically after its days as a hospitality and comedy capital. It is full of shingle houses wearing For Sale signs, kosher butcher stores with grimy windows, and roadside placards hawking horse pellets and "1995's BBQ chicken". There are some Hebrew day schools and Hebrew signs, owing to the area's Hasidic population. These Orthodox Jews live in clusters and their New Yorker counterparts summer at the area's smaller hotels.Locals tend to resent SYDA for its tax-exempt status and its various scandals.

Last summer I travelled to another one of the area's ashrams that was once a Catskills hotel – the Belvedere. Sivananda's director, Sri Nivasan, says that its founder, Swami Vishnu Devananda, chose the area because "he wanted to have an ashram close to New York City, and because of its spiritual energy".

At Sivananda, I felt as if I had indeed found a magic mountain, what with the fresh air, back bends on the porch, the daily 6am wake-up time, the regular karmic yoga and having to do free work around the ashram.

I know full well what my grandmother, who spent most of her Catskills holidays making jam, would have called karmic yoga or SYDA's guruseva. In keeping with the old Catskills parlance, she'd call it "getting some fresh air", or maybe even "keeping yourself busy".

THE WEEK IN RADIO



MAGNUS MILLS

IF YOU'RE a male resident in Iran these days, life's doorway is wide open. You can enjoy group laughter sessions at dawn in Teheran's public park. You can learn the great truths of Islam from a CD-Rom in a downtown computer-software centre. Or you can go to football matches, standing on the terraces with 30,000 other like-minded fellows, passing glasses of hot tea to one another and shouting rude things at the ref.

For women, however, there is much less choice. Apparently, it's football or nothing. In Crossing Continents (Radio 4, Thursday), Tim Whewell related how thousands of women fought their way into a stadium after their national team's victory over the United States in last year's World Cup. Hitherto they had been barred from watching or taking part in the game, but lately these women have gone it alone, setting up independent sports federations and playing five-a-side matches behind closed doors. Twenty years after the revolution, women in Iran are still obliged to wear full Muslim dress when they go out. But they feel a lot better about it now that they can add a pair of football boots as well.

The idea of the game of football giving hope to people is a noble one, as most Manchester City supporters will know. One of their biggest fans is Curly Watts, the actor from *Coronation Street* who plays Kevin Kennedy in real life. Dream Teams (Radio 5, Monday) gave him 20 minutes to go into raptures about the great days at Maine Road (which he remembers from his childhood). "Football at Man City defies logic," he admitted at one point during the programme. "You never know what the Blues are going to do next." Meanwhile, the presenter Jim White quietly taunted him by simply *not mentioning* Manchester United.

Berry Gordy's Motown (Radio 2, Wednesday) told another sort of success story. The record company Gordy founded in 1959 had a quality control department similar to the ones he'd known while working in the car-assembly plants of Detroit. A deft touch indeed, especially when the man he put in charge of quality was Norman Whitfield, producer of The Velvelettes' "Needle in a Haystack". Such foresight set Berry Gordy way ahead of the field in the early Sixties, and with acts like The Temptations, The Supremes and the Four Tops, there was little that could go wrong.

Except when the bigger labels tried to lure away the talent. Tamla Motown preferred to invest in research and development, rather than offer big advances for its artists, with the result that occasionally they would be tempted away. The first to defect was Mary Wells, best remembered for her performance of "My Guy". A rival company offered her half a million dollars, and she quickly jumped ship.

Less tempting was the offer made to Aaron Smith, navigator of the merchant ship *Harrington*. In 1822 he was abducted by pirates and forced to join their operations off the Cuban coast. Descendants: The Atrocities of the Pirates (Radio 4, Saturday) was a grim account of life on board ship in the 19th century. If you disobeyed your captain the punishment was harsh; you could be flogged, then roped by the ankles and pulled underneath the keel of the vessel. Very nasty, and that was just in the Royal Navy. If the pirates got you, it was much worse.

ARTS DIARY

DAVID LISTER

I AM pleased to be able to offer help and advice to the music industry. It emerged this week that problems have arisen with the plan by record companies to stage a "Summer Brits" in Manchester. The two-day event will raise money for the Government's Youth Music Trust scheme to provide more music education and instruments in schools, but now some promoters don't want to release their artists until tickets for their own tours are sold. The pop impresario Pete Waterman, who is handling part of the event, says: "If we can't put ourselves out for this, then we shouldn't be in the business."

But there is a way out. Why don't the record companies simply donate money from their massive profits to the scheme? They could easily top the £10m already given by the National Lottery. Indeed, it's a little hard to understand how exactly the record companies are being charitable. The public will spend money to buy tickets; the record companies' acts will get masses of free publicity. It's a curious kind of philanthropy. The best way of giving money remains... giving money.

ANOTHER DAY, another awards ceremony, another lifetime achievement award. This week saw the Rudolph Valentino awards for lifetime achievement in cinema. They are sponsored by the Motion Picture Association of Italy but were presented in London at a dinner hosted by Griff Rhys Jones and Rory Bremner. Well, they probably take their holidays in Italy. The lifetime achievers were Jeremy Irons, Claudia Cardinale and Bernardo Bertolucci, who have a fair few movies between them. But take a glance at some of the others on the shortlist: Daniel Day-Lewis, Ewan McGregor and Kristin Scott Thomas. They have some great performances to their credit. But surely you have to be at least into middle age before celebrating a lifetime's work. Or is the award fast becoming just another way of getting glamorous and photogenic stars to turn up at the ceremony?

ARTSPEAK WORD of the week has to be "festival". There was a time when companies put on productions, shows, operas, concerts. How unadventurous all those words now sound. The RSC's new brochure announces its "summer festival season"; the Royal Opera House announces that the House will reopen with a "festival" of opera, ballet and concerts. Hard to see how the festival differs from the ROH's usual practice of putting on operas, ballets and concerts. But if artspeak can sell tickets, don't knock it.



THE BOOKS INTERVIEW

Enver's never-never land

Ismail Kadare's novels take Albania's plight into the heart of Europe. **Shusha Guppy** talks to him



Alasdair Miller

While the Serbian and Kosovan delegates were locked up this week in the Château de Rambouillet, in Paris Albania's greatest living writer was anxiously awaiting the outcome. Ismail Kadare's latest book, *Three Elegies for Kosovo*, has just been published in France to great acclaim. It recounts the famous Battle of Kosovo in 1389, in which several Balkan kingdoms joined forces against the Turks, and lost.

The battle lasted only one day, but the Turkish leader Sultan Murad was killed, and the Turks left. (They returned 150 years later, took the whole of the Balkans, and stayed for 400 years.) The battle is described by three narrators – Turkish, Serbian, Albanian – in three short sections. For the following six centuries, the Serbs and the Albanians have been fighting over Kosovo.

Ismail Kadare once said that a writer has two ages: his natural age, and his reputation, which lives on another time-scale. His own reputation came to the West in 1970, when his novel *The General of the Dead Army* took literary Paris by storm. It tells the story of an Italian general who goes to Albania after the Second World War to recover the bodies of Italian soldiers and bring them back for burial. It was hailed as a masterpiece, and in France its author was received by intellectuals as a new, powerful voice from behind the Iron Curtain.

Since then, Kadare's prodigious output – 15 volumes of fiction, several collections of poetry and essays – has been translated into most major languages, and he has been nominated for the Nobel Prize 15 times. He has been compared to Gogol, Kafka and Orwell, but his is an original voice, universal but rooted in his own soil.

Kadare is profoundly involved with his country – "the antique Illyrium, the third region of southern Europe beside Rome and Greece" – and its language, a unique branch of the Indo-European family. He speaks in prophetic accents of "La Grande Littérature Universelle", which is his spiritual home: "Literature led me to freedom, not the other way round". That a small faraway country should have produced a writer of his stature adds weight to his belief that Albania belongs to the mainstream of European culture.

Kadare partly blames the West for the Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha's entrenchment: "The West forgave Tito and helped Yugoslavia, but it did not forgive Hoxha. When Hoxha broke with the Soviet Union in 1962, he was ready to turn to Europe, but he was rejected, so he made an absurd short-lived alliance with China. When that went wrong he built thousands of anti-nuclear pill-boxes, which he knew were useless, but he wanted to create a fear-psychosis. Albania suffered longer than any other Eastern European country."

The success of *The General* abroad put Kadare in an awkward position in Albania. Official critics savaged him. Where were the cheerful peasants, the Stakhanovite workers, the optimism about a glorious future? His book was gloomy, all mud and rain and rotten bodies, and the false heroism of war. Thereafter Kadare used a variety of literary devices – allegory, satire, mythology, historical narrative – to escape Hoxha's ruthless censors: "Hoxha fancied himself an intellectual and poet who had been to the Sorbonne, and he didn't want to be seen as an enemy of writers. Of course, he could have killed me in a 'car crash', or by 'suicide', as he did many others."

There followed nearly three decades of a deadly cat-and-mouse game. Kadare's books were in turn published and banned. He was made an MP one day, exiled to a remote region the next. In 1975, he narrowly escaped being shot, when his satirical poem *The Red Pasha* was denounced by a government employee. Yet he did not want to uproot himself by defecting. Instead, he chronicled the dark years of dictatorship in masterpieces such as *The Pyramid*, *The Concert* and *Chronicle in Stone*, an enchanting account of his childhood.

"Everyone knew that I was an anti-regime writer, and the fact that the regime could not condemn me gave courage to others," he explains. He finally left Albania in 1990, and was welcomed in France as an honoured guest: "One day I received a letter from Taniz Alia, Hoxha's successor, in which the Party was mentioned 23 times. I knew it was time for me to go. There was a struggle between democracy and dictatorship, and I thought that my departure would help the cause of democracy."

Kadare is slim, shy and courteous. His dark dapper suit and large horn-rimmed glasses emphasise his serious expression while his deep voice and strong accent are mitigated by a ready smile and laughter. He lives in Paris in a spacious, bright apartment overlooking the Luxembourg Gardens, which belongs to the French Academy. In 1996, he was made a Member of the French Academy of Moral and Political Sciences, replacing the British philosopher Karl Popper, and last year he was presented with the Légion d'honneur, the first Albanian to receive the honour.

In Britain, until recently, few people had read Kadare. Yet his literary progenitor is Shakespeare: "I read *Macbeth* when I was 11; it hit me like lightning, and I copied every word of it." Later he discovered the Greek classics: "After that nothing could have power over my spirit. I realised that there was a great universal literature which nothing can destroy. So when I went to Gorky Institute in Moscow, which was a factory for producing Party hacks, I was already immunised. What was happening in Elsinore or by the ramparts of Troy was more real to me than the wretched banalities of socialist-realist novels. I had three choices: to become a conformist, to stop writing, or to write as if I were free. I chose the last."

Since the collapse of Communism some former dissident authors have stopped writing, as if they had lost their *raison d'être*. Not so Kadare, who has since produced *Spiritus* (a novel about two ghosts who return to a postcommunist world), poetry, memoirs, and *Three Elegies for Kosovo*.

Has freedom of expression helped him? "For a writer personal freedom is not so important. It is not individual freedom that guarantees the greatness of literature, otherwise writers in democratic countries would be superior to all others. Some of the greatest writers wrote under dictatorship – Shakespeare, Cervantes. The great universal literature has always had a tragic relation with freedom. The Greeks renounced absolute freedom and imposed order on chaotic mythology, like a tyrant.

"On the other hand, nobody forced Gorky to write *The Mother*, in New York in 1905. Gorky's slavery was in his head, and his piece of rubbish murdered half the writers of Eastern Europe, as it became a model everybody had to copy. In the West, the problem is not freedom. There are other servitudes – lack of talent, thousands of mediocre books published every year."

Nowadays, Kadare prefers working in Paris. He writes in a café near his home for a few hours a day, reads, and spends time with friends, mostly French writers. At the moment his main preoccupation is Kosovo: "Why was this piece of Albania given to Serbia as a present after the War? It was a tragic error: 40 per cent of all Albanians live in Kosovo: a classic example of colonialism, worse than South Africa under apartheid. The Serbs evoke the Battle of Kosovo; it is as if Britain claimed Belgium because of the Battle of Waterloo."

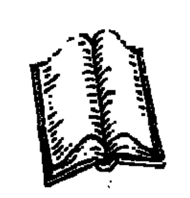
I pointed out that the world community feared the disintegration of the whole Balkans, with every tiny bit demanding independence. "You cannot keep a people in slavery by that sort of reasoning," he answers. "It is immoral. But I agree that there is a danger, and for that reason the European Community should negotiate for serious compromises, even sacrifices... For example, that for 5-10 years Kosovo would not join Albania, and that the Albanians of Macedonia would not rock the boat for the same length of time." What about America, I wondered? "I cannot answer that question," he says, "but I know that Europe must be responsible for its own destiny, otherwise it is the end of European civilisation."

Ismail Kadare talks (in French) at the French Inst, 15 Queensberry Place, London SW7 on 2 March at 6.30 pm (0171-838 2144)

ISMAIL KADARE, A BIOGRAPHY

Ismail Kadare was born in Albania in 1936, in Gjinokastra near the Greek border (also the birthplace of Enver Hoxha). He studied literature in Tirana, then spent three years at Gorky Institute, Moscow. When Hoxha broke with the USSR in 1961, Kadare returned and published his first novel in 1962. He left Albania in 1990 with his wife and daughter and settled in Paris, but goes back regularly. He has published 14 novels, three books of poetry, and volumes of essays and memoirs. Ten novels are published in English, five by Harvill: *The Pyramid*, *The Palace of Dreams*, *The Concert*, *The Three-Arched Bridge* and *Broken April*.

COVER STORIES



MORE TROUBLE for Phaidon, rescued from the receivers a few years back by businessman Richard Schlagman, a major collector of Stanley Spencer. Schlagman has had run-ins with a number of staff and authors. Now the trustees of the Henri Matisse estate are stepping up a seven-year legal battle against Phaidon for breach of copyright, and have served a writ. The family says eight Phaidon titles, including the bestselling *Art Book*, "unlawfully reproduced" Matisse works. The publisher claims the paintings have been used in "serious art books for critical purposes", the sort of fair-use clause cited by critics quoting an author's work. Family lawyers have countered that the books are not aimed at students, but the coffee table. Phaidon's defence cites the estate's "excessive fees". But what did Schlagman charge when last a publisher wished to reproduce one of his Spencers?

FEW PEOPLE are more loved in publishing than Liz Calder, a founding director and now Editor-in-Chief of Bloomsbury, which makes *The Times*'s snide distortion of her decision to begin handing over some responsibility to Virago publisher-turned-agent Alexandra Pringle all the odder. The paper suggested "the grande dame" was being "eased out", replaced by someone better able to attract young talent. In the first place, Calder is one of the least "grande" dames in publishing. Second, she has chosen a gradual hand-over so she can concentrate on her 100-odd authors. And she has no problem pulling talent, of whatever age. Bloomsbury without Calder is unthinkable – which is why their decision to publish Anna Pasternak's *Princess in Love* behind her back was totally dishonourable.

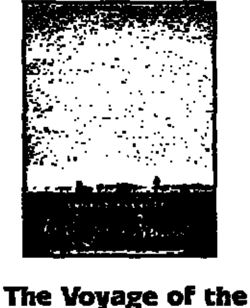
ONE OF last year's bestselling debuts was Ardal O'Hanlon's *The Talk of the Town*. Now his *Father Ted* co-star, Pauline McLynn, who plays the inimitable Mrs Doyle, is also at work on a novel. Two in fact, both featuring Irish private eye Leo Street, a feisty female whom publishers Headline hope will soon be up there with Sara Paretsky's V I Warshawski.

NEIL KINNOCK has resisted all urgings to put pen to paper. However, the former Labour leader has authorised Martin Westlake, a colleague in the European Commission, to write his life, granting him access to family, friends and colleagues, and rights to his papers. The book, due next year, was agented by Andrew Lownie and sold to Little, Brown, publishers of Kinnock's ex-deputy Roy Hattersley.

THE LITERATOR

Plenty of lolly in the ice

Freighted with plaudits, the latest US blockbuster sails into British waters at last. **John Sutherland** climbs aboard for a tour of inspection



The Voyage of the Narwhal
by Andrea Barrett
Flamingo, £15.99, 399pp

THE VOYAGE of the Narwhal, as is now routine with big American novels and movies, comes to Britain late in the day. It was released in the US last September; Andrea Barrett had made her mark with a collection of emigration stories, *Ship Fever*, which unexpectedly won a National Book Award in 1996. The US publisher, Norton, put significant investment into Barrett's subsequent nautical novel, intending to crown critical esteem with commercial success. It would be E Annie Proulx all over again.

Norton's investment paid off. *The Voyage of the Narwhal* got reviews to die for. The British publisher has sent reviewers a pack of Xeroxes oozing such syrup. Don't let them tell you that spin-doctoring is just a political phenomenon.

Andrea Barrett is a prize product of the college creative-writing course and herself teaches in a Master of Fine Arts programme. She got a Guggenheim Award to research this book (a lengthy bibliography testifies to her scholarly conscientiousness). One's first dilemma is whether to read, review, or grade the novel.

Frankly, the last is easier than the first. As an exercise in composition this is *summa cum laude*. It is, however, a difficult read, at least initially. The narrative is pitched between historical docu-fiction and Melvillean romance. It is 1855, on the Eastern seaboard. An expedition is embarked to discover the fate of Sir John Franklin's expedition to the frozen waters off Greenland. Franklin had been lost ten years earlier, looking for the North West Passage.

The *Narwhal* is commanded by a young Emersonian idealist, Zeke Voorhees. Also on board is a disillusioned naturalist, Erasmus Darwin Wells. Zeke is engaged to Erasmus's sister, Lavinia, who strikes one as very wet. The voyage of the *Narwhal* (which is fictional) is overshadowed by that of Elisha Kent Kane (which was historical). As they penetrate the eery waters of Baffin Bay, tensions develop in the 15-man crew. The tensions are screwed up to mortal pitch when the ship becomes ice-locked for many months in what is a graveyard for 19th-century vessels.

One of the initial problems with the novel is determining its creative centre. Neither of the principals, Zeke nor Erasmus, generates warmth in the reader. As with most seagoing yarns, there is no love interest. The point of the novel, for most of its length, seems to be the polar *mise en scène*. Forging a Victorian-scientific pastiche style, Barrett handles this aspect well. There are memorable descriptions of the wooden vessel, caught between plates of ice, rumbling "with sudden, explosive cracks that made the men feel as if they'd been caught in a giant mouth, which was chewing on the landscape". One thinks of the Ancient Mariner's ice-floes, which "cracked and growled, and roared and howled".

Things hot up (so to speak) in the last third. The survivors on the *Narwhal* make a break for freedom in an open boat. Zeke (presumed dead) is left behind. By a miracle they are rescued. Their expedition seems to have been futile. They have turned up enigmatic relics of Franklin's voyage which solve nothing. No passage has been discovered. Erasmus's specimens have been lost. All the limelight is drawn to Kane's triumphant return and his book, *Arctic Explorations*.

The narrative climaxes with a great surprise which it would be unkind to give away (this is not a book rich in surprises). It finally emerges what the *Narwhal* has, in fact, discovered. Running throughout the cogitations of the main characters has been what was called the monogenic debate. Was the human race one species, or many? Were those encyclopedias which showed "the esquimeaux like misshapen gnomes and the Negroes like chimpanzees" correct? Was Linnaeus right in "proposing a separate species of man, possessed of a tail and inhabiting the antarctic regions"?

Most Victorians adhered to the polygenic belief: they had no kinship with savage hottentots and degraded tribes in polar snows. The good ship *Narwhal*, the modern reader will be relieved to know, sails serenely into the harbour of political correctness on this question.

Shiftless in Southwold

E Jane Dickson goes into the flimsy beach-huts and crumbling follies of Suffolk to discover a new style of architecture, and a change of heart



Female Ruins
by Geoff Nicholson
Gollancz, £9.99, 221pp

THERE IS a kind of English understatedness that has nothing to do with stiff upper lips. If the emotions in *Female Ruins* are not splashed across the sky, it is not that these emotions are stifled, but that they are active, skirmishing things, constantly cancelling each other out.

Kelly Howell is a heroine you couldn't second-guess. Her late father, Christopher Howell, was a visionary and cult figure, "the greatest modern English architect never to have built a building". Exhausted by the probings of academics desperate for details of the great man, Kelly lives a quietly unconventional life driving a mini-cab in East Anglia. Self-contained to the point of inertia, she enjoys driving because it is a semi-automatic function. She does not particularly enjoy exercising at the gym but she does it because she knows she will feel better. She has similar expectations of sex, but is often disappointed. When Dexter, a Californian tourist with a serious irony deficiency, hires her for sightseeing on the Suffolk coast, her hopes are not high.

East Anglia is an excellent setting for Nicholson's palette of half-tints and Kelly is an engaging tour-guide. She has inherited her father's passion for architectural foibles, and the bemused Dexter is treated to beach huts at Southwold, the follies of Thorpeness, ruined churches, crazy-golf courses, and Sizewell B nuclear plant.

Kelly's feeling for "insubstantial architecture", interleaved with her father's philisophical writings, is the real keystone of *Female Ruins*. We are romantically attracted to ruins because they represent a glory that is gone, but beach huts and the like were never built for glory, so all the bets are off. Nicholson is the least invasive of authors, writing comfortably in the third person. His heroine is never given the narrative once-over: we're not told if she's pretty or plain, right or wrong but, through the buildings she loves, Kelly's self image, flimsy and faded but still standing, is revealed.

Slowly, Nicholson expands the metaphor. When Dexter and Kelly visit the ruined monastery at Monkwich and stand on the crumbling shore where the bleached bones of parishioners reach out of the cliff face, the point is made. Even our most solidly founded buildings, the churches faith leads us to think of as sempiternal, are, from a millennial perspective, temporary. Everyone builds his house on the sand, because sand, in the end, is all there is. Nothing is permanent: not buildings, not people, certainly not passion.

Kelly and Dexter have a brief, deeply unromantic affair, but when it turns out that Dexter has links with her father's past, the relationship turns into something more complicated than love or sex. Again, these feelings are acknowledged only in terms of architecture. Kelly is greatly taken with her father's theory of "gendered space". In this value system, the Puritan iconoclasts who scrubbed out saints' painted faces and their minimal modern descendants are seen as testosterone-powered hooligans, while the ruined icons, from plaster virgins of the 17th century to the screen idols of Hollywood, are inherently, but not inviolately, female.

Only when the action switches to California, where everything is hard-edged and shiny, does Nicholson's preoccupation with Englishness become properly apparent. America's motel-culture and flat-pack malls are transient, disposable, without the grace of even a pretended faith in the future. Kelly feels more dislocated than ever in a country where her father's eccentricities are not seen as a flash of brilliance but a failure of professionalism.

Stripped of her last illusions about her father, Kelly may be wiser, but she is no sadder. True to form, she subverts our expectations and emerges feeling faintly liberated. Nicholson's philosophy is dense but not all dark. In a world where all will come to dust, there are still some small redemptions. *Female Ruins* shows us how to wrest them from the wreckage.

Can literature replace faith in a secular age? **Michael Schmidt** dissents from a critic's sermon

Religion of a novel kind

Critics are never disinterested. Most have an agenda but, as with other writers, that agenda evolves over time. James Wood, who was born in the mid-1960s, enjoyed an evangelical upbringing but sang in the choir of Durham Cathedral. So he experienced faith in two very different forms, which in a sense propose distinct political and aesthetic as well as spiritual models. As a critic, he remains torn between the reticent and subtle on the one hand, the abundant and demonstrative on the other: the High and Low church.

Wood arranges his essays on writers in *The Broken Estate* according to a rough chronology of subject, from Thomas More to W G Sebald. The book concludes with four essays which explore "The Broken Estate" in an almost vulnerable spirit. What Wood does not tell us, and what we need to know, is when and on what occasion each essay was written.

In his essay on Virginia Woolf, he remarks that she was less interested in the fact of impressions, more in their nature. And Wood himself has a marked preference for writers who do not find the depths only on the surface but manifest what he is pleased to call a "theology". In his sweet-and-sour demonology, Flaubert the supreme stylist has a lot to answer for.

The first two literary essays, on Jane Austen and Herman Melville, embody a contradiction that runs through the book. Is the essay on Austen early, along with that on Virginia Woolf? They have a tiggerish, undergraduate air, triumphantly inventing the almost-round wheel. "It is this innovation, the discovery of how to represent the brokenness of the mind's communication with itself, that constitutes [Austen's] radicalism," Wood writes. This and nothing else. "It is through



The Broken Estate: essays on literature and belief
by James Wood
Jonathan Cape, £16.99, 384pp

inwardness that we get to know a character." There is no other way. Not even through action?

The elaborate rhetoric of the Melville essay feels different in kind; it is certainly different in rhetorical strategy. Is Wood, who subtitles this book "essays on literature and belief", emerging from belief towards literature? Or is he torn between kinds of manifest belief? Wood, who received "a musical and religious education", can ask a book the wrong question, or else the right questions in the wrong way.

For instance, he is singularly uninterested in sex, yet the sexuality of a writer – as in Melville, Mann or Lawrence – has a lot do with how that writer manifests "belief". I wish he was more alive to the libidos of writers. In Mann, Lawrence and others the "theology" (if the term must be applied) is genitally coloured, or genitally bleached. And how much more so with his contemporary Americans!

Wood's Melville essay begins: "When *it* come to language, all writers want to be billionaires. All long to possess so many words that using them is a fat charity. To be utterly free in language, to be absolute commander of what you do not own – this is the greatest desire of any writer." He has only just disposed of Jane Austen, who is not alone in refuting his enormous claim. "What writer does not dream of touching every word in the lexicon once?" Almost any writer of the 18th century, for starters.

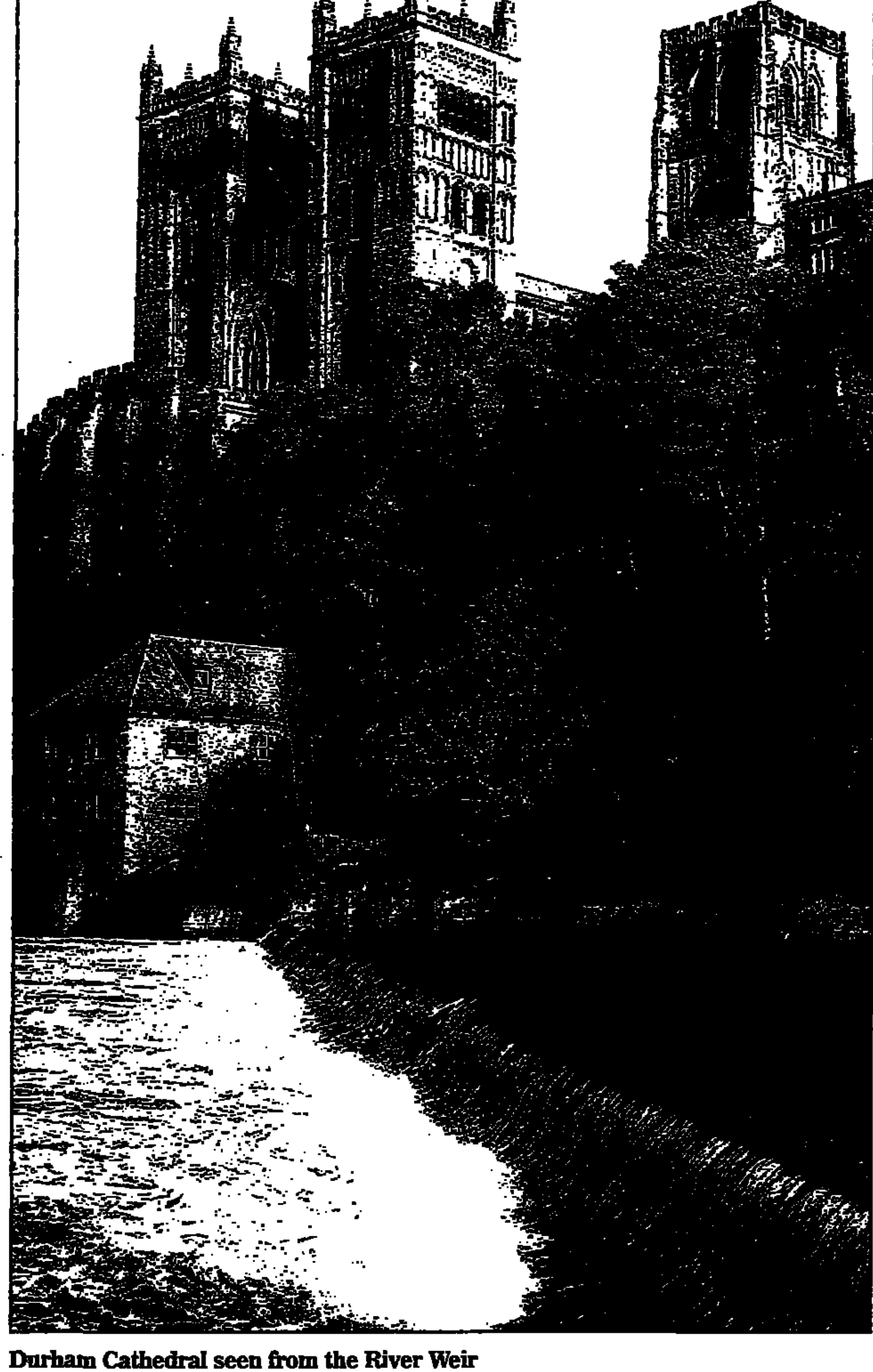
Wood discloses how Melville succumbs to the logic of a chosen metaphor. It can take him, and his metaphysics, in curious directions. Language has its own dynamic, and a writer who gives it its head can be galloped off in unexpected directions. "The love of a metaphor literally leads Melville astray theologically." And a love of theology – broadly construed – can lead James Wood astray.

Wood is at his best when engaging a writer like Gogol, whose life and work propose vertiginous paradoxes. He is at his most predictable with "one of the century's greatest religious writers", D H Lawrence, "one of those greatest mystical texts" turns out to be the awful *The Woman Who Rode Away*. He is at his worst when riled, trying to be even-handed. Reading Anthony Julius's book on T S Eliot's anti-Semitism "is like watching a maniac trying to calm a hysteric". This is wrong on both counts, and silly.

Am I the only reader troubled by the juxtaposition of Wood's exoneration of Eliot, and his wilful assault on George Steiner's *Real Presences* and Steiner's oeuvre as a whole? It is facile to parody Steiner's style, or to patronise him. The substance of Steiner's argument eludes Wood, but it shouldn't. *Real Presences* and *The Broken Estate* hoe the same stony field.

But Steiner's title is a red rag to a (once-Christian) bull. Steiner, he complains, has appropriated and applied a term with specific, sacramental meanings. By the same token, Wood consistently misuses the term "allegory", a specific mode in Christian writing that depends on a spiritual commonality.

The Broken Estate is a miscellany; and the introduction attempts to yoke the pieces together. Wood discovers a congruence between the religious and the novelistic impulse. "The real, in fiction, is always a matter of belief, and is therefore a kind of discretionary



Durham Cathedral seen from the River Weir

magic: it is a magic whose existence it is up to us, as readers, to validate and confirm." "The real" here is less philosophically complex than Steiner's idea of the "real". If Wood's rhetoric is less emphatic than Steiner's, it is no subtler. Note the pompous commas around "as readers", underlining a tautology. And "discretionary magic" – is there room for magic in this kind of criticism?

"Chekhov thinks of detail, even visual detail, as a story," Wood writes, and this is wonderful; but he adds "and thinks of a story as an enigma." He pushes too far. "From the various memoirs by relatives and friends, we can imagine [Chekhov as] a man who always seemed a little older than himself." This is vivid; but then Chekhov is seen as "older than anyone he met, as if he were living more than one life". Wood is carried away from sense into nonsense.

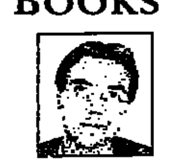
As for the notion that "the real" exists outside the language that constructs it, so that language can confidently refer to it, this begs a question or two. Wood's is manifestly impatient with writers who reify their medium, such as Georges Perec and Vladimir Nabokov (what would he make of Christine Brooke-Rose, B S Johnson or Michael Westlake?). He is decidedly mainstream, impatient of experiment, but dissatisfied that the mainstream – in the Britain of the writers he discusses – should flow so shallowly today.

Wood evinces time and again the caustic intelligence that reminds us of F R Leavis and his *Scrutiny* disciples. He is a critic hungry for something. He knows when he hasn't found it. When he does find it in adequate measure, he will be a formidable advocate.

Michael Schmidt's book "The Lives of the Poets" is published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson; he is Director of the Writing School at Manchester Metropolitan University

Brain storms in a test tube

A WEEK IN BOOKS



BOYD TONKIN

Why respect scientists who peddle silly myths?

EVER SINCE Stephen Hawking sought to peer into "the mind of God" and watched his sales shoot through the stratosphere, heady speculation by leading scientists has picked up an impregnable prestige. From the neo-Darwinists who plant the seed of market forces in our genes to the digital wizards who find paradise on-line, tall tales from some copper-bottomed *scientific* source always draw a crowd. Pundits busy during this year's National Science Week (from 12 March) will give thanks for those titans of the lab who deign to share their wit and wisdom with the plebs.

Up to a point, Lord Bragg. Expert guesswork is all very well; but when top names on one patch spin yarns about a subject far beyond their ken, nasty accidents can happen on the page. And they will not, in this galaxy or the next, come much nastier than *Dancing Naked in the Mind Field* by Kary Mullis (Bloomsbury, £12.99).

Dr Mullis won a Nobel Prize for chemistry in 1993. At the Cetus biotechnology corporation in California, he devised the polymerase chain reaction (PCR). It allows the isolation and fast replication of DNA sequences *in vitro*: a monumental breakthrough that lies behind genetic research into heritable diseases, the use of DNA evidence in solving crimes, the search for a clearer map of human evolution – even the central conceit of *Jurassic Park*. Hoffmann-La Roche thought PCR important enough to pay Cetus $300 million for the patent. Mullis pocketed a $10,000 bonus for his pains.

So far, so heroic. Big Science never sounded bigger. In his laid-back, ageless-hippie style, Mullis – a celebrated surfer, jester and all-round party animal – explains the birth of PCR with charm and zest. He offers a riveting ringside-seat account of the LAPD's DNA-sample fiascos in the O J Simpson trial. What he truly knows, he knows (and tells) wonderfully well.

But the bulk of these breezy essays stray way beyond DNA or PCR. Mullis is a knee-jerk contrarian: show him the orthodoxy on someone else's turf, and he will want to stand it on its head. Add a strong dose of New Age credulity, with a gallon of anti-government bile, and the results range from the ditsy to the plain dismal.

"Hunter S Thompson meets Stephen Hawking", shouts the cover. In your dreams (formerly LSD-assisted, he admits), Dr Mullis. "David Icke meets Julie Burchill" might be much nearer the mark.

Mullis believes that global warming and ozone-depletion are urban myths cooked up by bureaucrats in search of fat grants. He believes that a girlfriend saved him from a near-fatal overdose of laughing gas by travelling to him "on the astral plane". He believes astrology is simply "true" – *if* you have your horoscope "cast by a computer". And he believes (as you may have surmised) that he was abducted by aliens from his cabin in the woods.

Then the giggles have to stop. Inevitably, Mullis is also convinced that HIV infection does not cause Aids; but that a sex- and drug-induced viral overload does. He insults and libels the 99-per-cent majority of responsible researchers who disagree ("They are still making payments on their new BMWs out of your pocket"), and equates his band of heretics with Galileo *contra* the Church.

Now, if HIV really is a harmless virus, it matters not a lot if you transmit or acquire it. Bloomsbury (of all publishers) is promoting this daft book on the back of its author's status as a Nobel laureate. If his tiny sect is wrong, and the consensus right, it could prove fatal to its readers.

In the afterword, Kary Mullis proudly calls the Nobel "a free pass for the rest of your life". Hold on a minute there, pal. I think your pass just ran out.

Fine art of friendship

Richard Eyre acclaims a memoir of the agent who outshone her stars

ONE SHOULD leave one's mark on everyone one loves," said Peggy Ramsay in a letter to her lover, the actor/writer/director Simon Callow. Only he wasn't her lover exactly: more, as the subtitle of his book suggests, a "passionate friend", which is a euphemism that denies the book its most fascinating aspect. It is a love story, and if it is a love story without sex, it is only because one of the participants was a 70-year-old woman, the other a 30-year-old homosexual man.

The affair with Simon Callow began with a *coup de foudre*. They met by chance, they talked without drawing breath, they exchanged letters, she watched him act, she became his patron, he became her "Puppy". To him she sacrificed the thing she held dearest: her independence.

She found in him energy, youth and unambiguous passion for the things she cared about most: Life and Art – but not in that order. For Art everything had to give way: friendship, comfort, marriage. "Expect nothing," she said, "and everything becomes a bonus". With Simon it became apparent she expected everything of him, and in his way he gave her everything he could. He gave her love without desire.

Love Is Where It Falls
by Simon Callow
Nick Hern Books, £14.99, 214pp

Peggy Ramsay was a literary agent, who dealt exclusively with writers who wrote for the stage and – much less important to her – for the screen. She left her mark on all her writers, all of whom at some time or other, however briefly, she was infatuated with: David Hare, Christopher Hampton, Robert Bolt, Alan Aykbourn, John Mortimer, Joe Orton, Edward Bond, Caryl Churchill, Willy Russell, John McGrath, Howard Brenton, Peter Nichols and more.

She had what Simon Callow described as an "amorous" relationship with all her authors; she identified something in their work that she wholly admired, pursued them, represented them, encouraged them, and was almost invariably disappointed by them. She judged her clients by comparison with dead authors ("Is he as good as Shakespeare, dear?") and would say to one client of another "Do you think he'll write anything really good, dear?".

She provoked strong feelings in what one client decribed to me as her "menagerie". They wanted to be loved by her, and were sometimes hurt by her contempt, or exasperated by her exacting standards. When I took over the National Theatre, she said to me: "Dear, I hope you'll have the courage to be unpopular."

Most of what one knew of Peggy was legend: her age, her lovers (who possibly included Beckett, and certainly Ionesco), her background, her acting career, her home life – if one could ever have imagined Peggy being so bourgeois. It's shocking to discover the factual detail: her mother, her husband, her abortions, and the solitariness of a life in which the company of books was almost invariably preferable to people. Except when it came to Simon, with whom she desperately craved companionship. "Should we adopt a child, you and I?" she said, and he, for once, was silenced with amazement.

Peggy was a good deal larger than life – or life was a good deal smaller than Peggy, which is why it's possible to write about this book and ignore the fact that Callow's love story is a triangular one. Through most of the years of his "affair" with Peggy, he was having an affair with a rich, handsome, sad (and suicidal) Egyptian boy.

Callow has a brilliant eye and ear. No photograph could do justice to Peggy. A very good portrait painter might have painted her over many sittings if she had ever had the patience, but unless she had been listening to Schubert or Strauss she wouldn't have stopped talking. Callow brilliantly captures her gloriously idiosyncratic conversation, larded with epigrams: her flights of smoothly modulated sentences interrupted by italicised attacks on words, her voice swooping like herons diving for fish.

At the end of her life and the onset of Alzheimer's, the droll gave way to the tragic, and she became as small as life. As David Hare said, she became just like a human being. She was frail, needing reassurance, needing to be convinced that her life had mattered, and Callow describes this painful decline with an immensely touching fastidiousness. If she hadn't been its subject, she would have loved this book; it is about everything that mattered to her. "It's frightfully well-written, dear," she would have said. And it is.

Sir Richard Eyre was Director of the Royal National Theatre from 1988 to 1997

A swampy tale deep in the heart of Essex

James Urquhart can't find the focus of a bold voyage from colonial forests to the ruins of Stansted Airport



Horse Latitudes
by Jay Merrick
Fourth Estate, £10.99, 276pp

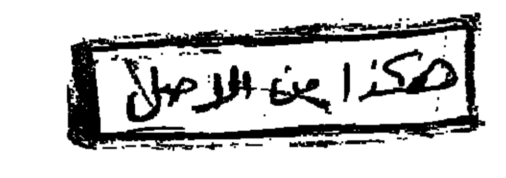
JAY MERRICK'S debut novel spins an engrossing yarn of self-discovery that reaches into the murky backwaters of colonial administration in 1930s South America. Despatched from London to make his way at the Roraima offices of Spivey & Co, Shipping Agents, James Freyn glides easily into the pukkah social circles of the expat Temhari Club. But a public slip of etiquette and a commission to fetch two horses from the mysterious Luchenne's ranch in the forest reveal to Freyn how brittle the civilised veneer really is.

Freyn is now 106, and living in a cardboard box in the Delta when the young scientist, Walter Cowley, happens upon him. It is 2021, and the Delta is a squat of outcasts scraping a living on what remains of Stansted Airport after it was destroyed by an architectural-terrorist cell. Cowley is entranced by Freyn's lucid recall of events, and transcribes it.

Merrick is a confident storyteller, but his style seems consciously resonant of other works. He has great fun creating Demcorp, the Orwellian state authority presiding over all in 2021; and plausibly hints at events such as "the designer fashion hostage crises of 2006". Yet Freyn's voice shares the inveigling allure of Conrad's sea-tales; there is an easy comparison between *Horse Latitudes* and *Heart of Darkness*.

Merrick builds the novel's sensations steadily from Freyn's ostracism through his unsettling encounter with the Kurtz-like Luchenne, his malaria-ridden return with the horses, and his embarcation for New Orleans. But the experiences of good and evil that overpower Freyn are almost abstract, lacking the substance to haunt him over 80 years.

Either Merrick is flattering by imitation, or Freyn is a front for Merrick's own fulminations on the chimerical nature of history, memory and sanity. While the first-hand account of the distressing transport of the horses is sharp and exciting, taken as a whole, *Horse Latitudes* remains just out of focus.



INSPIRATIONS

WRITER ALAN SILLITOE

The music
I wrote a long novel in 1969 called *A Start in Life* while listening to Handel's *Messiah* playing over and over again. I had begun my book as a short story but must have been carried away, or inspired, by the music.

The play
The language and tension in many of Harold Pinter's plays enthralls me.

The place
Nottingham, where I was brought up, has always seemed an interesting and lively town to me. On visits there to see my two brothers we go round the pubs we have known all our lives, and by the end of the evening I have enough stories to last for as long as I can go on writing.

The film
As a youth I saw George Arliss starring in Alfred E Green's *Disraeli* and in one scene that great Prime Minister fell asleep in the House of Commons while his political adversary was making a speech. This struck me as an effective ploy when dealing with rivals.

The artwork
Constable, Turner, and Delacroix. The illustrated Phaidon Press pocket books on Constable and Delacroix which came out around the end of the Second World War have given much solace on my travels. And the beautiful and sensitive figures of sculptor Bernard Sindall.

Alan Sillitoe's new novel 'The Broken Chariot' is published by Flamingo (£16.99)

SPOKEN WORD



The Morte D'Arthur
read by Derek Jacobi
Highbridge, 9hrs, £23

A PERSONAL obsession with Malory has taught me something that I hope will be of use to audiobook enthusiasts who want a good overview. Look up any author you fancy hearing read aloud on the amazon.co.uk website and it will tell you what is available both here and in the US. This American production is wonderful: Jacobi treats it as a thriller, his voice altering in an instant to make Gawaine a thug, Lancelot a dreamer, Merlin a menace and Arthur gullible, solemn or weary.

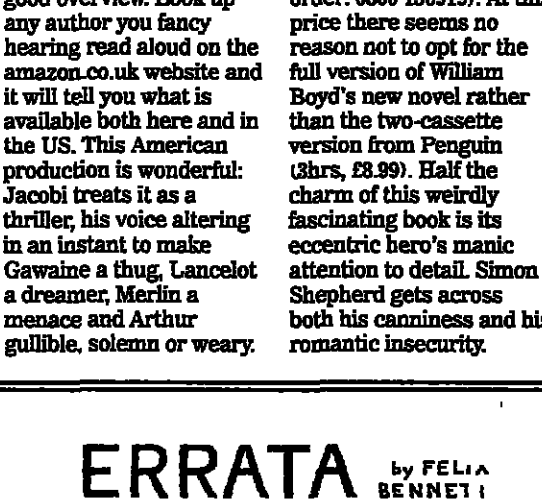


Armadillo
read by Simon Shepherd
Chivers, 11hrs, £16.95

ANOTHER TELEPHONIC source of good things is the competitively priced, unabridged audiobooks from Chivers (only by mail order: 0800 136919). At this price there seems no reason not to opt for the full version of William Boyd's new novel rather than the two-cassette version from Penguin (3hrs, £8.99). Half the charm of this weirdly fascinating book is its eccentric hero's manic attention to detail. Simon Shepherd gets across both his canniness and his romantic insecurity.

ERRATA

by FELIX BENNETT





DEEPLY MOVING AND FUNNY CARTOON ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST FEW SECONDS OF THE UNIVERSE.

PAPERBACKS

BY EMMA HAGESTADT AND CHRISTOPHER HIRST

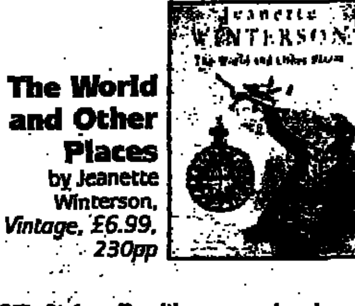
Osbert Sitwell
by Philip Ziegler, *Pimlico, £14, 461pp*

SCARCELY READ now, Sir Osbert was the most talented of the Sitwell trio. Yet even Ziegler is lukewarm about his poetry, while Sir Osbert deliberately made his autobiography, inexplicably a bestseller, "old-fashioned and extravagant". So why did this lacklustre talent attract one of the best biographers around? Moving in the irresistible milieu of Waugh and Connolly, Sitwell displayed an oddly contrary character, combining aggression and racism with generosity and tenderness. Despite his bluff façade he wrote to his male lover "without you, even life is death".



The House Gun
by Nadine Gordimer, *Bloomsbury, £6.99, 292pp*

HARALD AND Claudia are white middle-class professionals whose world is smashed to pieces when their only son is arrested for murder. More interested in mapping the shock waves that reverberate through their marriage than in the courtroom drama, Gordimer describes with exactitude every nuance of the couple's relationship as they search for explanations. This is the new South Africa, and the boy's parents (apathetic liberals) find themselves in the hands of a black attorney – the convincingly drawn Hamilton Motsami.



The World and Other Places
by Jeanette Winterson, *Vintage, £6.99, 230pp*

A BOOK of take-offs with an occasional crash landing. All are a joy to read, but sometimes the debts in Winterson's glittering fictional fragments are a little obvious. A hybrid of Swift and Calvino, "Turn of the World" concerns an imaginary island where "the richest women wear coal necklaces... while modest people sit by their fires, poking their diamonds." But the feather-light "Poetics of Sex" could be by no one else: "Beneath the sheets we practise Montparnasse, that is Picasso offers to paint me but we have sex instead." Picasso, of course, is female.



Delphinium Blues
by Stevie Morgan, *Hodder, £9.99, 282pp*

WHEN HER husband leaves her for a course in "Advanced Shagging" with a young redhead, Jess is left with two children, a huge mortgage and a very pretty cottage garden. Based on her *Independent* column "Beloved and Bonk", Stevie Morgan's comic novel about surviving the first year of divorce breathes with a chatty intimacy. Good tips on how to avoid membership of the local "deserted wives club" and look soignée at the school gate. Before you can say "decree nisi", Morgan's eco-friendly heroine gets her life back on

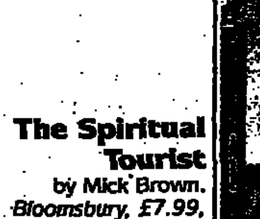
Araby
by Gretta Mulrooney, *Flamingo, £6.99, 183pp*

RORY KEENAN has spent his life being embarrassed by his loud Irish mother – an enormous woman who sang out loud on buses and dressed her family in charity shop cast-offs. Now on her death bed, she is every bit as annoying, loudly requesting boiled eggs and ham and making rude remarks about the other patients on the ward. Beseiged by memories of his Sixties childhood, Rory tries to pull together the few remaining strands of family history. A pleasure to read, this unsentimental London-Irish novel bristles with uncomfortable moments between mother and son.



A Defence of Masochism
by Anita Phillips, *Faber, £6.99, 165pp*

SKATING ON thin ice, Phillips views masochism as self-abegnation, catharsis, replacing "bad blood with new blood". It is not the opposite of sadism: "The perfect choice [of partner] may be another masochist." Her fetters do not prevent intellectual gymnastics. On page 15 she quotes Genet: "it is important to get down into the dirt", but this turns out to be a metaphor on page 130, where she advocates bathing as part of the masochistic ritual "to purify the ego". Roping in such unlikely supporters as St Theresa and Simone Weil, the argument is more vertiginous than seductive.



Little Sister
by Carol Birch, *Virago, £6.99, 278pp*

BEING AN ageing hippy in the north of England doesn't sound too jolly, if Carol Birch's latest novel is anything to go by. Cathy Wren, writer of children's books, is eating a plate of Havarti cheese and contemplating suicide when she receives the news that her younger sister is dying from Aids. Even when it comes to death, it seems, her sister is going to pip her to the post. Just where the oddly named Veronica Karen has chosen to die is a mystery, though, and Cathy, accompanied by her sister's old boyfriend, is forced to tour the surrounding hills and dales in her orange Mini in search of her.

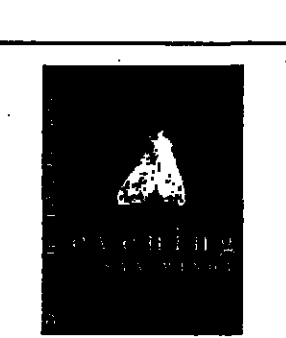


The Spiritual Tourist
by Mick Brown, *Bloomsbury, £7.99, 308pp*

BROWN STARTS his gnostic wanderings in north London, where he visits a swami who generates quantities of *vibhuti*, a powdery ectoplasm. It is hard to disagree with the pithy view of Brown's companion, a singer he calls Van: "What a fookin' joker." This is by way of preamble to a prowl round the great spiritual supermarket of India. The author's search is genuine, but he never leaves his appraising intelligence behind. Visiting a guru called Sai Baba, Brown declares himself "purified", but in the next paragraph he feels "betrayed, foolish". A deeply felt, superbly crafted account.

Romantic revelations as she lay dying

Mary Flanagan encounters the New England nobs and admires a lyrical turn from an elegant stylist



Evening
by Susan Minot
Chatto & Windus, £15.99, 264pp

EVENING IS Susan Minot's fifth book and by far her most expansive and ambitious. Her protagonist, Ann Lord, is described by a friend as "like any other woman only more stylish". She grew up in the late 1950s before feminism, sexual liberation and radical politics had transformed American society. Despite three marriages and five children, she has lived a life of comfort and privilege centered on maternity, houses, cocktail parties, golf clubs, holidays and clothes. She confesses to having "let men take over my life many times", paying the price of social and financial security.

Now 65 and a widow, she is dying of cancer in her elegant Cambridge house, her son and three daughters in anxious and irritated attendance. There are bedside visits from old friends and a trusted nurse to administer injections.

Ann lies helpless, overwhelmed alternately by pain and her teeming hallucinogenic memories. Gradually she disengages from her familiar surroundings, amazed to discover that the review of one's life which accompanies dying is not a linear progression but a "snowfall of images".

Her most vivid memory is of a weekend in Maine 40 years before when she was a bridesmaid at her best friend's lavish wedding. There she met and fell passionately in love with the dazzling Harris Arden, both choosing to ignore the imminent arrival of Maria, his fog-bound fiancée.

The account of their brief affair is quite mesmerising, though it can sail queasily close to Mills and Boon. This isn't the minimalist Minot. However, she more than compensates with a new lyricism, a broadened scope and the brilliant management of a complex structure.

Vintage has just reissued her earlier books to coincide with *Evening*. In *Monkeys*, her first novel, she proved herself an acute observer of family dynamics. The novel is lean and edgy, full of stinging insights and free of authorial excursions. It's point of view is fresh and close-up.

Lust, however, is urban and cynical. These stories of self-destructive young women tell of good fortune squandered and freedom badly used. *Folly*, a clever if tepid period piece with pretentions to Edith Wharton, is a kind of dress rehearsal for *Evening*.

Both novels involve rich Bostonians whose exclusive milieu admits no rebels, eccentrics, artists, members of the working class: no one who has had to struggle with much of anything besides their own emotions.

Minot is keenly aware of the tacit pressures exerted by the group upon the individual. Both Ann, and Lillian in *Folly*, bravely flap their wings, but in the end they choose safety over authenticity, becoming imprisoned in the codes of their class.

At 25, Ann is bright and genuine, if somewhat naive, aspiring to independence and untainted by hypocrisy. She also has a lovely voice but stops singing as she grows older.

She senses that something precious has been lost, her soul, perhaps, her true self. The group wins. The self is banished or buried and then forgotten. Both heroines lapse into conformity, not so much unhappy as unrealised.

Ann associates Harris with the discovery of that self, though he is lost forever at the very moment he becomes hers. Nobly or foolishly, she releases him, while the reader is given a more objective glimpse of his character. Is his inability to leave Maria motivated by loyalty or secret relief?

Minot is particularly good on the evocative power of objects. She is rhapsodic without losing control of her formal elements and *Evening* is a beautifully plaited and convincing whole. Memory fragments are intercut with the wedding story and present suffering with imagined exchanges with Harris. Ann's internal litanies are reminiscent of her abandoned Catholicism and of William Faulker's streams of consciousness. Faulkner also provides the epigraph, directing us to another who once lay dying.

Initially, Minot's new lyricism seems too genteel and the privilege she affects to disparage is rendered very seductively.

Yet her poetic style lends import to the trivial and transitory and to what would otherwise be a shallow life. It allows her into previously unexplored human territories, and to a condition of benign nihilism, in which nothing is without significance, though the significance is impossible to define.

When her daughter asks who is the Harris of her mother's ravings, Ann answers, "Harris is myself". She was fully alive in his embrace as she is fully alive in her final moments. The two experiences are similarly described. That "true self" that she had forgotten or assumed that he had lost is recaptured and restored, on the very brink of its annihilation.

BESTSELLERS

Catherine Cookson's popularity is undimmed. *The Thursday Friend* has gone straight into the top five and her fans will be pleased to know that her estate will publish new novels well into 2001. No change at the top of the non-fiction list this week. Armchair gardeners are seeking inspiration from irrepressible Alan Titchmarsh and his *Groundforce* to tackle the wilderness outside – perhaps they hope they'll doze off and awake to find their gardens miraculously transformed. More armchair activity, although not quite as peaceful, is heralded by Bruce Jones's *Official ITV Formula One Guide*.

Compiled by Bookwatch on sales over seven days ending 21 February 1999
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ORIGINAL FICTION

	TITLE	AUTHOR/PUBLISHER	PRICE	WEEKLY SALES
1 (1)	The Testament	John Grisham (Century)	£16.99	9,970
2 (2)	Come Together	Josie Lloyd & Emlyn Rees (Arrow)	£5.99	8,557
3 (-)	Single & Single	John le Carré (Hodder)	£16.99	4,566
4 (-)	The Thursday Friend	Catherine Cookson (Bantam)	£16.99	2,307
5 (8)	Messiah	Boris Starling (HarperCollins)	£5.99	1,706
6 (3)	Southern Cross	Patricia D Cornwell (Little, Brown)	£16.99	1,542
7 (6)	It Means Mischief	Kate Thompson (Bantam)	£5.99	1,473
8 (5)	Liar Birds	Lucy Fitzgerald (Black Swan)	£5.99	1,101
9 (9)	The Death of Amy Parris	T R Bowen (Penguin)	£5.99	1,066
10 (10)	City Girl	Patricia Scanlan (Bantam)	£5.99	959

ORIGINAL NON-FICTION

	TITLE	AUTHOR/PUBLISHER	PRICE	WEEKLY SALES
1 (1)	Station X: the codebreakers	Michael Smith (Channel 4)	£14.99	3,915
2 (2)	Men Are From Mars...	John Gray (Thorsons)	£8.99	3,357
3 (6)	The Year 1000	Robert Lacey & Danny Danziger (Little, Brown)	£12.99	2,541
4 (4)	Little Book of Feng Shui	Lillian Too (Element)	£1.99	1,891
5 (3)	Birthday Letters	Ted Hughes (Faber)	£14.99	1,879
6 (-)	Ground Force Workbook	Alan Titchmarsh (BBC)	£9.99	1,498
7 (7)	Seafood Odyssey	Rick Stein (BBC)	£18.99	1,295
8 (10)	The Little Book of Calm	Paul Wilson (Penguin)	£1.99	1,139
9 (-)	Official ITV Formula One Guide	Bruce Jones (Carlton)	£9.99	1,092
10 (8)	Notes from a Big Country	Bill Bryson (Doubleday)	£16.99	999

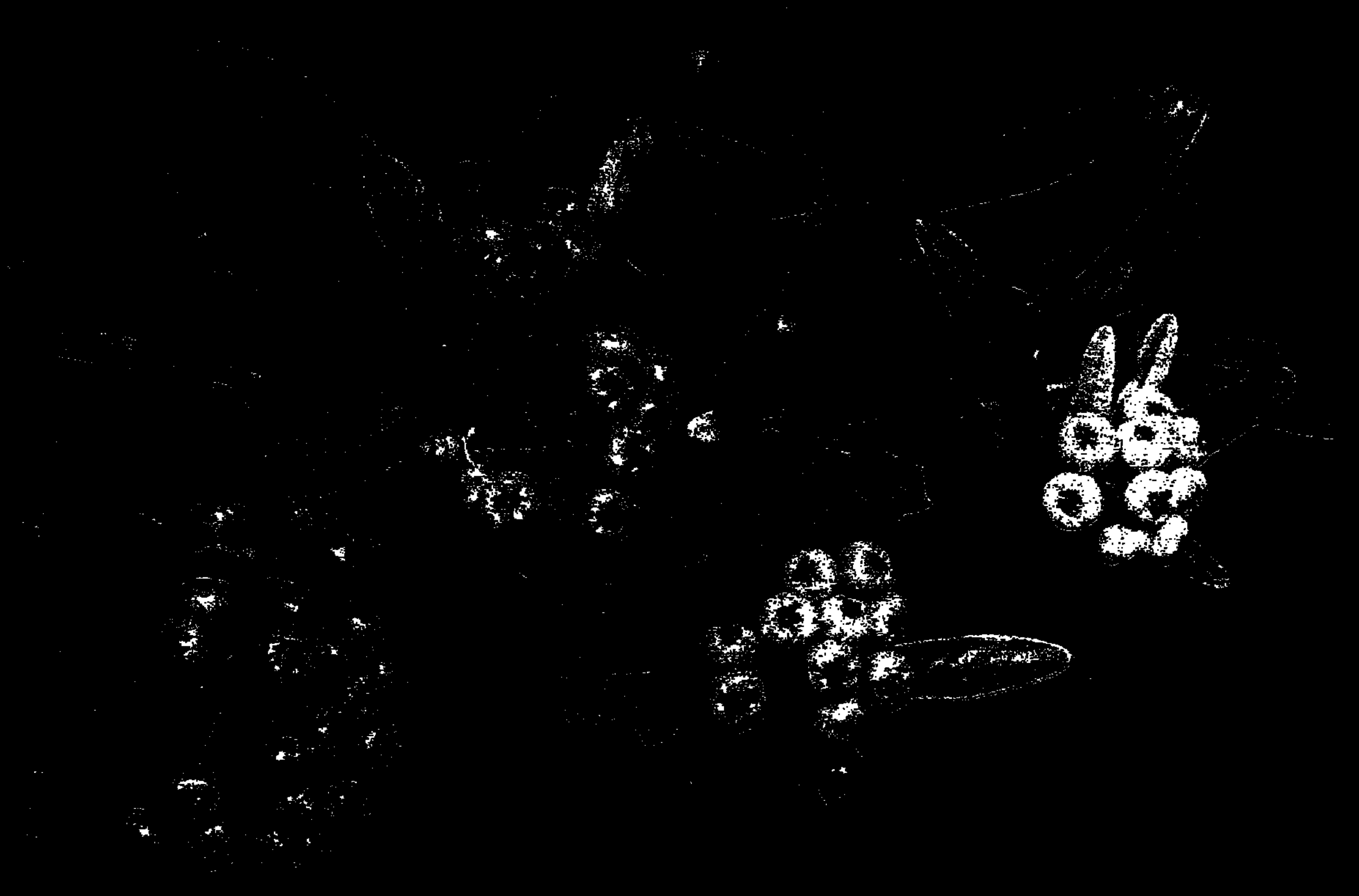
A little shady practice

Many shrubs thrive on sheltered north- and east-facing walls. Anna Pavord chooses the most spectacular

Shade is too often treated as the gardener's whipping-boy. In truth, it is not half as bad as it is made out to be. Shady walls and fences can be clothed as elegantly as sunny ones, provided that the shade is caused by lack of sun, not lack of light. A hefty sycamore, dripping over your fence, will create problems, particularly if it is not your tree. Lifting the canopy – that is, taking off a few of the lowest branches – can improve the environment dramatically for plants underneath. The problem will be to persuade your neighbour to co-operate. Wine often helps.

Without the putative sycamore, north- and east-facing walls present few problems, though you may not get as colourful a display as on sunny walls. Foliage will be excellent. North walls are almost easier than east. They get no direct sun at all, though in summer a few slanting beams may drop in at the beginning and the end of the day. In a new garden, you need to spend some time watching walls and the amount of light they get before you start planting anything at all.

East walls are more treacherous. They are cold, but get a burst of sun, if there is any, at the beginning of the day – fatal to plants frosted overnight. Most people know that east walls are bad news for camellias. Other plants can react just as badly. Cells that may be frozen need to thaw out gently, just like water pipes. An early blast of sunshine may cause too quick a thaw, rupturing cell walls. Plants collapse and may die. I lost a 30-ft 'Mermaid' rose on an east wall, though it had a trunk as thick as my arm and seemed invincible. Chaenomeles and pyracantha have never been affected. More surprisingly, neither has the evergreen shrub piptanthus, with its fine, hand-shaped leaves.



Pyracantha Flava, one of the wows of James I's garden *Maurice Nimmo/A-Z Botanical Collection*

The chaenomeles (japonica) is already in bloom, with blood-red flowers on dark wood. I like them spreadeagled on a wall, pinned flat and pruned fairly severely after flowering to eliminate twigs that try to push forward. This makes it easier to grow other things in front, but also seems to give it a more oriental air, like the two-dimensional branches of japonica you see in a Japanese print or a piece of fabric.

'Crimson and Gold' is the one to go for if you like your colours rich and uncompromising. It will not grow much beyond 4ft. 'Knap Hill Scarlet' is equally brilliant. If gentle introspection is more your thing, choose the gentle, pink-and-white 'Moerloosei', fast-growing, wide-spreading, and reaching eventually to a height of 8ft, though its spread may be twice as broad as that.

Pyracantha is also best when it gets some corrective training. Some time ago, I planted one on our east wall, to the right-hand side of the kitchen window, a biggish window of old-fashioned, small square panes. Over the years I've trained the pyracantha to make another "window" alongside, the branches criss-crossing to make "panes" against the walls. It's slightly dotty, but it makes me smile when I turn in at our gate. The blackbirds like it, too.

Pyracantha was one of the wows of James I's garden, when it was a rarity newly brought in from the east. It is very popular now, and deservedly, as happy on a north wall as it is on an east one. It is evergreen and gives two meaty performances a year. I prefer it in berry to when it is in flower. Bees think otherwise. It is spiny, but not viciously so, and is not difficult to handle.

The blossom is the same on all varieties, white with a heavy, musty scent. Berries can be yellow ('Flava' or 'Soleil d'Or'), orange ('Orange Glow' or 'Orange Charmer') or red ('Dart's Red' or 'Watereri'). I am not fussy about the times I trim pyracanthas to shape, leaping in with the secateurs whenever the whiskers of growth start to get in the way of the chequerboard pattern.

I started by training one stem up the side of the window, then choosing horizontal branches to train out from that main stem. You have to wait for suitable growths to present themselves, but pyracantha is so vigorous that that is rarely a problem. When there were six or seven stems stretched out parallel at about 15-in intervals against the wall, I started looking for upright growths sprouting from the horizontals that would turn the straight lines into a series of squares. It is far more complicated to describe than it is to do.

Fire blight, a fungal disease that floats in on the air and ravages the foliage, is pyracantha's worst enemy. There is no cure. But don't lie awake worrying about this scourge. It may never happen.

Because rain tends to come in from the south and the west, north- and east-facing walls and fences act as barriers, preventing the ground under them from getting properly wetted. Wall shrubs on any aspect do better if they are planted a little distance – say, 18in – out from the wall. The ground will also retain more moisture if you dig in a good quantity of manure and compost before you plant. Mulch all wall shrubs regularly in autumn and spring.

There has been no lack of water this winter, but drought is not just a summer problem. East and north walls face winter's coldest and most drying winds. Evergreens suffer more than deciduous shrubs. Foliage loses moisture faster than the roots can take it up. Leaves turn brown and die.

This gloomy scenario need not worry us this year, at least. Too often gardening is seen as a series of problems to be overcome rather than pleasures to be indulged. Here is an excellent pleasure for an indulgent north wall: *Azara microphylla*. This shrub has small dark, shining, evergreen leaves and powdery tufts of bright yellow flowers that smell strongly of vanilla.

It will not do well on excessively limey soils and may keel over completely in a tough winter. In pampered city gardens, wrapped in the central heating that escapes through windows and doors, it will thrive. It flowers in March, needs no pruning and suffers from no particular nervous tics – a paragon.

Where there is some shelter from wind, the twining climber *Celastrus scandens* will perform well on a north or east wall. Its season is autumn, when the orange-red seed vessels produced from insignificant flowers explode to expose startling red seeds. It is very vigorous; it likes a good mouthful of fence or porch to get its teeth into. Once established, it needs little nannying.

All these plants will give brilliance to shade. If you want something cooler, choose the white-flowered climbing *Hydrangea petiolaris*. Or plant the compact upright shrub *Euonymus fortunei* 'Silver Queen', with its fine variegated leaves. When it is established, thread it through with a pale clematis such as 'Marie Boisselot' or 'Lady Northcliffe'.

Variegated *Cotoneaster horizontalis* is another great beauty that thrives in shade.

Make it the mantra for the year: Shade is Good.

A BOOK OF CLIMBERS

ANYONE WITH a bare wall to fill should get hold of *Creative Climbers* by Paul Williams (Conran Octopus, £12.99). Mr Williams is head gardener at one of my favourite gardens, Bourton House, Bourton-on-the-Hill in Gloucestershire, which I've written about before. Here is a writer you can trust. All the information is practical and relevant. There is a brief but inspiring directory of interesting climbers, such as *Aconitum hemsleyanum*, a lovely climbing monkshood that has hooded mauve flowers in late summer.

Throughout the book are practical projects, designed to find solutions for a wide range of garden problems. What should you grow on a balcony's trellis divider? White-flowered solanum, with rhodochiton and old-fashioned, scented sweet peas, suggests Mr Williams. What can you use to support scrambling pumpkins in a vegetable garden? Blue plastic water pipe, threaded through with thin dowel, is the answer. The pipe, strengthened by the wooden dowel, can be bent into a semicircular igloo which will support climbing French beans and tomatoes as well as squashes.

Some of the projects are too fanciful to take seriously. If I had a stepladder as good as the one shown on pages 66-67 of this book, I would not leave it awkwardly abandoned in the middle of a flower border, even to support a clematis as lovely as the 'Duchess of Albany'. But that is a quibble. The book is as instructive as it is beautiful.

The English hedgerow massacre

COUNTRY MATTERS



DUFF HART-DAVIS



Hedges have been ripped up in the name of agricultural efficiency for the past 50 years, but now their value to wildlife and farmers is being recognised by policy makers *Apex/Tim Cuff*

The hedge that separates our lowest field from our next-door neighbour had grown into a formidable barrier of hazel, hawthorn, elder and bramble, with a few young elms rising above the thicket. For 12 years we had deliberately left the hedge untrimmed, letting it increase in height and width so that it made a good wind-break and gave our animals shelter from the westerly gales that roar up the valley.

Then, alas, the elms began to die. They had looked extremely promising, and had reached a height of maybe 20ft; but I had feared all along that they were doomed, because it is common knowledge that once young trees become big enough to act as hosts, the beetle bearing Dutch elm disease returns to infest them. Sure enough, by last summer our new elms were moribund, and now they are dead as dodos.

Our only option is to fell and burn them – a melancholy task, on which we are now engaged. At the same time, we are cutting back the underbrush to the line of the fence, which had become deeply buried.

Not owning a flail mower, we are tackling the job on foot, I wielding a chain-saw, my wife peeling away swaths of intertwined branch and bramble as I cut them free. The trunks of the elms are at most six inches in diameter, so that they are easily sawn through; but the fact that they rise through mounds of thorns and spikes makes them uncomfortable fellows to tackle.

Several times I have been forced to my knees by a tree keeling over and squashing a mass of brambles down on top of me – an event that puts me into intimate contact with the hedge and encourages me to think about field boundaries in general. One obvious fact is that, quite apart from their primary functions of defining property and controlling stock, they make tremendous havens for wildlife.

The one we are pruning is home to numerous rabbits, and its dense foliage contains many old nests of blackbirds, chaffinches, tits and so on. In autumn, blackberries, elderberries and hawthorn berries provide birds with food. At several points, badgers and foxes have forced passages under the sheep-wire, and at low level there is a mass of the dead wood and litter beloved of entomologists (hawthorn is believed to support more than 200 species of insect; blackthorn over 150). As for shelter – the grass on the first five yards above the leeward side always grows more lushly than that farther up the field.

For the past half century, hedges have had a bad time: many thousands of miles have been grubbed out in the name of agricultural efficiency, and thousands more spoilt by neglect. Between 1984 and 1990 alone, 75,000 miles disappeared; from 1990 to 1993 the loss continued at the rate of 11,000 miles a year.

This massacre caused widespread public outcry. People clearly feel in their bones that hedges are part of our history, an essential feature of the English landscape. Countless fields were created by the Enclosures Acts of the 18th and 19th centuries, when millions of seedling thorn bushes were planted, especially in the Midlands.

Regular shapes, square or rectangular, are likely to date from that time; but there is ample evidence to show that many hedges are far older, some dating back at least a thousand years. A celebrated formula lays down that the number of woody species found in every 30-yard stretch approximates the age of the hedge in centuries.

It is criminal that farmers have so abused an ancient asset. Now, though, there are signs that the tide is turning. The main agent for improvement has been the Hedgerow Regulations issued by the Department of the Environment during the summer of 1997. These rules require anyone wishing to remove a hedge to get permission from their local authority. Anybody who does grub out a hedge without leave may face an unlimited fine, and may also be required to reinstate the barrier.

A considerable amount of damage was done in the months preceding the new legislation, when farmers, anticipating the changes ahead, amalgamated small fields or straightened out awkward boundaries. But now that several people have been fined, the rules do seem to be working – especially as their prohibitions are reinforced by incentives in the form of grants for restoring and creating hedges and walls. These can be obtained under the Country Stewardship scheme run by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Maff), or the scheme for Environmentally Sensitive Areas.

Here in the Cotswolds, ESA field boundaries consist of walls (on top of the hills, where stone abounds) and hedges (in the valleys, where far less stone is readily available). We can now get a grant of £4 per metre for planting a new hedge and £28 per metre for building a field wall – sums that probably cover about half the costs involved. As a result, an encouraging amount of walling and hedging is in progress.

Along with enlightened government policy on boundaries has come a better understanding of the benefits that well-managed field margins offer to agriculture and wildlife. Research by the Game Conservancy Trust has shown that a six-yard-wide "conservation headland" round the edge of an arable field, which is then selectively sprayed so as to leave some broad-leaved weeds and the insects associated with them, is of incalculable benefit to birds such as partridges and pheasants, whose chicks depend largely on protein from insects in their first few weeks of life.

Similarly, a 400-yard beetle bank – earth heaped up in a line across a field, and planted with long, tussocky grass, costing altogether about £80 to create – can harbour so many beneficial, aphid-eating insects that it may save the farmer £300 a year in labour and pesticides, and earn him the same again in extra grain harvested.

In this climate, it is no surprise to find that the South of England Hedge-Laying Society is flourishing as never before. At its launch in 1984 it had 10 members; now it has 124. The National Hedge-laying Society has more than 200 members, and so many people want to go in for each year's national competition that it has become difficult to find long enough runs of hedge on which to let entrants loose. With 100 entrants tackling 10 yards each, 1,000 yards are needed – and lucky is the owner who gets all that expertly cut and laid within a single day.

NATURE NOTES

ALREADY, EARLIER than ever, spears of wild garlic are shooting up in the woods on the escarpment. At the moment they are only three or four inches high, but the plants will soon create a dense carpet nearly a foot deep, and in April they will throw out a mass of star-shaped white flowers.

I have often wondered what wild creatures make of this sudden change in their environment.

Badgers, in particular, must find it rather bewildering. One week they are going about their nocturnal business over a bare, grey-brown woodland floor. The next, they are pushing through head-high, dark-green vegetation.



Wild garlic is sprouting early this year *Mike Danson*

Colour is certainly less important to them than smell, for they operate mostly in the dark, and see largely in black and white. But as their sense of smell is reckoned to be at least 500 times as acute as that of a human being, what on earth do they make of wild garlic, which has an overpowering scent? So strong is the tang that it penetrates even into the eggs of chickens which peck out bulbs, and farmers' wives used to say that a rabbit that had run through garlic could go into the pot without salt or pepper, as it came into the kitchen fully seasoned.

DUFF HART-DAVIS

Space age in the provinces

It may be muddy, but living in the country gives you plenty of elbow room. By **Celestria Noel**

WHEN WE moved to the country last year our friends reacted two ways. One group said it was their dream and how lucky we were to be able to manage it. The others were aghast and prophesied disaster.

"No one will want to come and see you camping miserably in some freezing dump," said my friend the historian Adam Zamoyski encouragingly. "You'll go mad."

A very chic Parisian PR, with whom I had had friendly professional dealings over five years of working on a glossy magazine, said: "For a break, perhaps?" But when I told her it was permanent and that I was not even going to have a flat in London, she just looked from me to my new business card with a mixture of horror and pity. She left it on the table and I had to remind her to take it. The idea of calling someone in Shropshire was clearly beyond her.

Of course, when people ask you: "How you can stand living in the country?" what they really mean is that surely life without them, or people like them, must be unbearably boring. The assumption is that there is no one amusing to see outside London and no culture.

This is particularly untrue where we are. Ludlow and the Welsh Marches have always attracted writers and artists, which is not to say that there are not perfectly interesting people farming and running small businesses as well, who have been here for generations. As for romance, as Jilly Cooper realised long since, there is nothing like fresh air for restoring the glint to the eye.

As for urban comforts, when my fussy New York friend Marianne came up, we were able to provide her with her morning cappuccino and all the newspapers at the Cookhouse, a former pub now run by the team who used to own Waltons in Knightsbridge, and sophisticated company in the form of the man who used to manage Mortimers, the ultra-fashionable restaurant on Manhattan's Upper East Side once favoured by the likes of Bianca Jagger and Jackie Onassis. He now has a tree nursery. She winced at the clothes that people were wearing to go shopping but marvelled at both the antiques and the array of butchers shops.

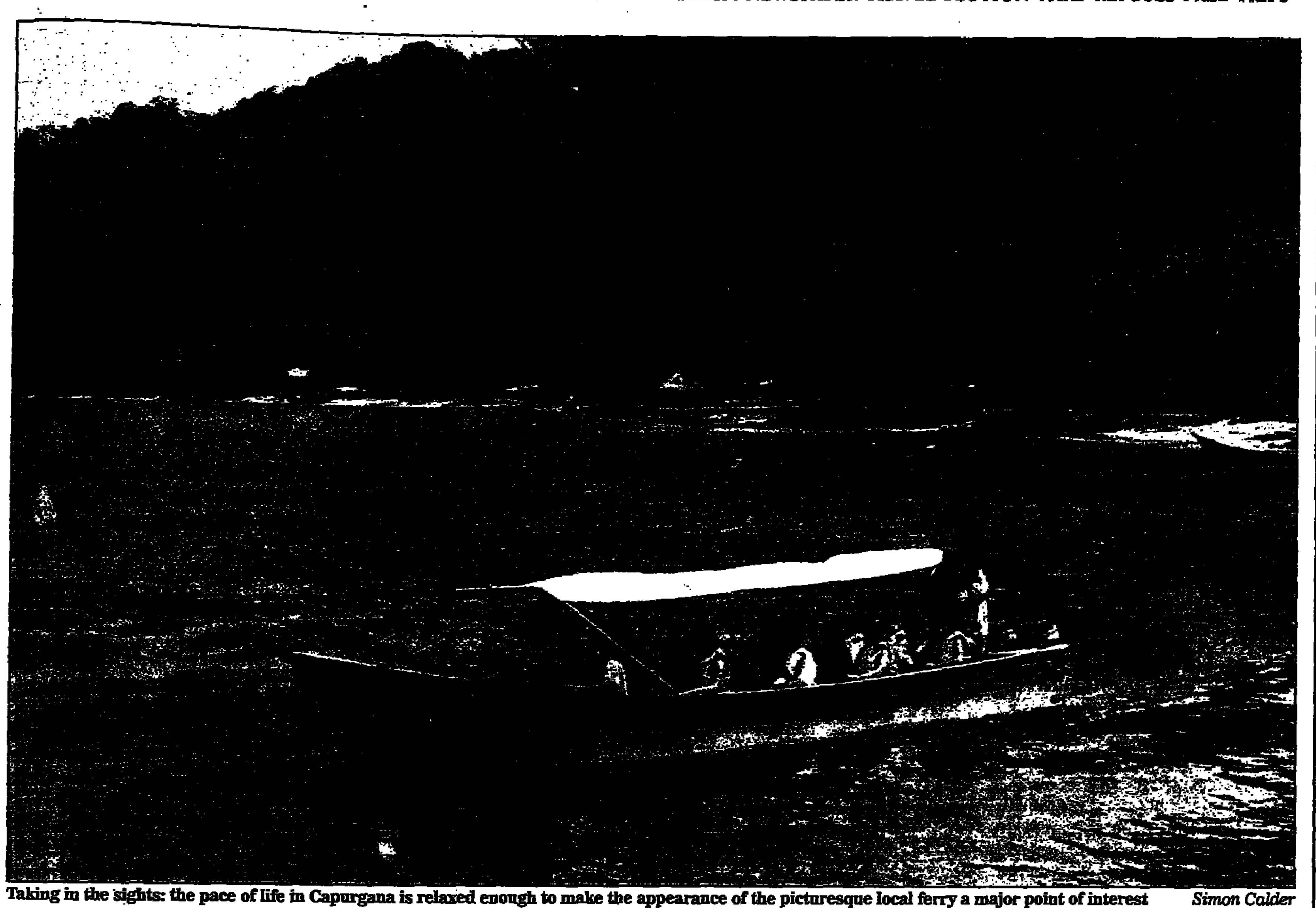
On a practical level, the best thing is the space. To have this much elbow room in London, you would need to be a billionaire. Simple things make so much difference. I love having a utility room with a second downstairs sink so that buckets of dirty water from washing the floor do not have to go down the kitchen sink and there is somewhere to wash the boots, children and animals. There is room to leave the ironing board up. I can hang things to dry in the garden on a line. There is space for a second fridge, kept exclusively for drinks. Most luxurious of all, there is box room for the junk I should have got rid off when we moved but didn't and a shed for all my new toys like the utterly useless leaf picker-upper bought by mail order in a fit of gardening enthusiasm last autumn.

I admit it is muddy. I need gumboots even to walk down the lane to the post office in the village a mile and a half away. It is also smelly – the cattle are in for the winter and they still go in for muck-spreading round here. But the lane has been there since Neolithic times, part of the network of green lanes which linked Wales to the Roman road system to the east and its hedgerows are showing new signs of spring every day.

When we lived in London, I thought February was the time to jet off to Barbados. Now I could not bear the thought of missing the primroses.

TRAVEL

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Taking in the sights: the pace of life in Capurgana is relaxed enough to make the appearance of the picturesque local ferry a major point of interest *Simon Calder*

To the ends of the earth

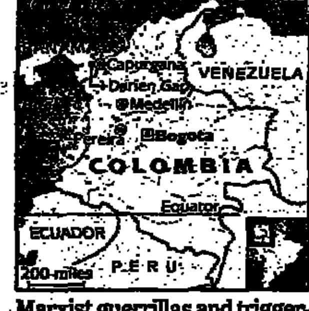
A hair-raising flight over forests and mountains deposits you in the remote Colombian town of Capurgana, an undiscovered paradise on the edge of the last great wilderness. By Simon Calder

Don't you just adore fellow passengers? As the tiny (and tinny) Twin Otter swooped and swerved into the aviation equivalent of a three-point turn, the besuited businessman next to me yelled above the shrieking engine: "This is the third most dangerous airport in Colombia."

Thanks, pal. We were heading straight for a mountainside draped in rich forest whose precise arboreal composition I was about to become alarmingly familiar with. I wondered whether to ask the obvious question about which two other airports could possibly be more dangerous than this.

But I contented myself with gripping the armrests, gritting my teeth and gulping pitifully as the wheels scraped the treetops. We performed an ungainly U-turn moments before making contact with one of the most beautiful backdrops anywhere in the Caribbean.

That's the thing about Colombia: South America's most seductive nation satiates all your travel desires, but only after making you suffer. To get this far, I had flown from Britain on one of the world's more dangerous airlines to Bogota – where dozens of European tourists had died last year when their plane slammed into a mountain near the Colombian capital; hopped from there to Pereira, in a region devastated a month ago by an earthquake; overnighted in Medellin, spiritual home of the world's cocaine industry; and climbed aboard a dodgy-looking plane with a dodgier-looking crew, all sunglasses and hyperactivity, to an area where narco-traffickers,



Marxist guerrillas and trigger-happy soldiers coalesce into a nightmare of violence.

I wouldn't hear a word said against these fine fellows (the pilots, not the armed gangs), mind, after they successfully brought the aircraft under some sort of control and bounced into land on a space that looked smaller and less cared-for than a supermarket car park. My fellow passenger looked serene; maybe he was on some kind of medication, I speculated. I glowered at him anyway, and then promptly cheered up when I observed that the airport bus was, in fact, a donkey and wagon.

In one of the most peaceful and beautiful locations that has the good fortune to be washed by the gentle Caribbean Sea, there is little need for transport. This is Capurgana, the last outpost of the most mixed-up, yet ultimately gorgeous country in the world.

Everything about the place is soft. The warm air envelops you with comforting caresses that ease away the cold sweat of fear. Instead of sweating across Tarmac, your feet melt with great delight into the streets of Capurgana – which turn out to be paved with sand (if that is not a civil-engineering impossibility). And the people who inhabit the town at the end of the world are gently welcoming and intensely jolly.

Since heading into the almost-sheer rock face that overhangs Capurgana is not a viable option, every path aims towards the sea. Follow any of them, and you reach a broad arc of shore. The beach is a sandy trampoline billowing out to meet the Caribbean then retreating playfully from the preposterously blue sea. All the colours seem to have been artificially enhanced in order to look good for the holiday brochures. But the tourist hordes have yet to materialise.

Hungry? A fair crowd gathers at the only functioning restaurant in town, which sprawls out on a pier striped in deck-chair pastels. The confidence of your swagger towards a table is only momentarily dented by the sight of a fence made from the flattened fuselage of a Cessna that clearly didn't make the turn in time.

Whatever you want, Capurgana will deliver. So long, that is, as what you want is red snapper grilled to imperfection but rescued by a Polar beer, salad and the surroundings. You might reflect back to the flight here, or more particularly the point on boarding when a revolver was taken from the bothersome passenger; the stewardess carried it like a toy and dropped it in the hold with the rest of the luggage. How was it Gabriel Garcia Marquez described his home country? Oh yes: "One of the least secure and most disordered countries in the world." Yet I dare you not to be entranced by the sheer beauty of Colombia and smitten with the eloquence and vibrancy of the people.

Also, it's fun – and affordable. Life in Colombia might be cheap, but so is the cost of living. As you watch the unwittingly picturesque ferry that serves as the local bus drift off along the coast, content yourself with the knowledge that few people will ever experience the sultry side of life at this particular point seven degrees north of the Equator, where Colombia ends and the umbilical of Panama begins. Indeed, should you ever tire of this Impressionist rendering of bliss, you can always go to another country: Panama is just a walk away.

"Most of the time the path follows the coast," advises one guidebook. "Go at a leisurely pace, to take in the splendid scenery," recommends another. "The hills are alive with the sound of *bandidos*," is the summary offered by your lunch companions, one of whom turned out to be the chap in the suit from the plane. (Those two more dangerous airports, by the way, are Popayan and Manzinales.)

If you decide, against the odds and advice, to take the high trail towards the Panamanian border, then seek local help. A 10-year-old called William will escort you to an improbable-looking gap in the forest. He will scrawl a map that, were it remotely legible, would certainly turn out to be fanciful. Offer him a few thousand pesos, then stagger, sweat and swear through the undergrowth until you reach a hilltop tablet announcing you are entering the Republic of Panama.

You could, at this point, retrace your steps. But a wild scream stops you dead. It turns out to be the afternoon flight from Medellin making the usual approach. There must be some other way out of here, but it turns out to be to press on across one of the world's last great wildernesses – the Darien Gap.

For the further adventures of Simon Calder, listen to BBC Radio 4 tomorrow at noon, for the first of three parts of the series 'Bridging the Gap'

FACT FILE



When to go
During the dry season, between December and April – anyone seeking to make this trip at other times of the year will have a miserable time.

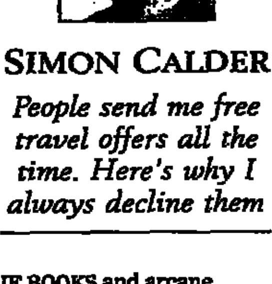
Getting there
Simon Calder paid £422 for a return flight from London to Bogota through South American Experience (0171-976 5511), and a further £120 for flights onwards to Pereira, Medellin and Capurgana. At present, Journey Latin America (0181-747 3108) has some excellent fares on the Colombian airline Avianca to a range of destinations.

Red tape
British travellers do not require visas to visit either Colombia or Panama, although you can expect a comprehensive going-over from both sets of immigration officials. And if you think that's bad, wait until you arrive back in Britain from Colombia.

Medical care
The main threat is from mosquito-borne diseases. A strain of malaria resistant to chloroquine and paludrine has been reported. Furthermore, dengue fever is a growing threat in tropical regions. It is therefore tremendously convenient to avoid being bitten by mosquitos. Consult a travel medicine specialist such as Masta (0891 224100) for up-to-date advice.

Travel advice
The Foreign Office issued this warning one month ago: "Violence and kidnapping are serious problems in urban Colombia. In rural areas there is a risk of being caught up in guerrilla or paramilitary attacks, or opportunistic kidnapping. The border area with Panama and the Uraba region of Antioquia are especially high risk, as are other areas outside government control. Visitors should not stray away from major urban areas or from established tourist routes and should be aware that even these can become dangerous, usually without warning. It is often safer to travel by air than to risk a road journey. Road travel after dark is extremely dangerous. Visitors should consult the British Embassy in Bogota (tel 317 6690) and the local authorities before finalising their travel plans."

The problem with freebies



SIMON CALDER

People send me free travel offers all the time. Here's why I always decline them

THE THING about normal jobs is that people rarely send you presents. The thing about travel journalism is that people send you stuff all the time: books for review, copies of specialist journals and offers of free travel. This week, I propose to conduct a ramble through this week's postbag.

First, you will know that good reviews in newspapers sell books. With this in mind, the travel desk of *The Independent* is circumspect about reviews for guidebooks. Only when a travel guide has been thoroughly tested will we venture a strong opinion on it; I think the last to benefit was Frewin Poffley's invaluable and hilarious *Greek Island Hopping* (and yes, Thomas Cook Publishing, you can quote us on that).

This year promises to be quite a bruiser for travel guidebooks. In a few weeks, AA Publishing will move into the independent travellers' market. In the summer, Virgin is expected to resuscitate its city guide series. And this week, Footprint Guides unveiled a fresh paperback format, sending journalists books on Singapore, Peru and Andalucia.

What intrigued me most was an effusive quote on the back of the Andalucia guide attributed to *The Independent*. A check failed to identify any such review – for the simple reason that it was not printed in this newspaper but in *Saga Magazine*. I don't know whether to be more alarmed at the erroneous credit or the implication that our pages are hard to distinguish from a publication aimed at more mature travellers.

DO YOU recall a short-lived experiment on the short-lived airline Dan-Air where meals for both outward and return flights were installed in the seatback trays? Neither do I, but it was alluded to this week in *AITO News*, a publication for members of the Association of Independent Tour Operators. "Some of us will no doubt still remember Dan-Air introducing seatback catering on their BAC 1-11 fleet," writes Alan Murray of Viking Aviation. He then reveals: "With the ingenious use of a nail file or coin, one could open the inbound meal and have seconds." I'm trying to visualise how this worked. Can anyone explain, and supply either photographic evidence or a diagram?

MICKEY MOUSE and his spouse could, according to the latest edition of *USA Now*, be making for Manhattan. Or at least that's what I infer from the assertion that the recently opened New York Convention and Visitors' Bureau in London "will help tour operators concentrating on MICE itineraries". I called the office (0171-437 8300) but couldn't get a squeak out of them about the meaning of MICE.



IF BOOKS and arcane publications don't sound much like presents, how about this: free travel for you and your family, free insurance, and even the chance to bump fare-paying passengers off planes.

Among the freebies that have crowded on to my desk this week, an insurance company offered me an annual travel policy. This could be handy for journalists planning to take a whole family to Alton Towers Hotel ("the place your children will beg to visit") or travelling by train in France ("complimentary or discounted travel, in return for editorial").

Then, halfway through some complex discussions about an important consumer issue, an airline PR suddenly said: "How do you fancy a week in Monserrat?" – something of a *non sequitur* because we were discussing the separation-out of passenger service charges at the time, rather than dream islands in the Caribbean.

Strangest of all is the airline that wrote to travel editors offering free top-grade membership of its frequent-flyer club. This doesn't just allow hacks to relax with the help of a drink or two in the airport executive lounge; it also guarantees a seat on a flight which is fully booked. Just how impressed would you be if you were bumped from your reserved seat on a flight to make room for a travel journalist?

I shall be declining all these offers, even though the very same airline had only a week earlier demoted me to the lowest grade of its frequent-flyer scheme because I had failed to score enough points over the year.

Airlines, hotels and tourist offices don't offer all these freebies just because they're nice people: the Spanish tourist board estimates that trips by foreign journalists bring coverage worth over £30m in advertising.

SOMETHING TO DECLARE

NEWS FROM THE TRAVEL WORLD

Bargain of the week 1: With-frills air travel for silly prices
Since Air UK was taken over by the Dutch national airline and rebranded KLMuk, it has borne the brunt of new competition from no-frills airlines. Almost every route on which it flies from its home base of Stansted faces competition from BA's offshoot, Go, based at the same airport, or Debonair and easyJet from nearby Luton.

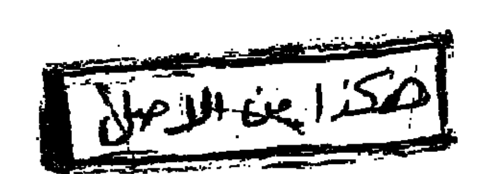
KLMuk has responded by cutting fares to no-frills levels, while still offering frills such as free snacks and drinks. Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Jersey, Manchester, Newcastle, Amsterdam, Frankfurt and Paris cost £48 return, while Rome and Milan are £79. You may book direct with KLMuk on 0990 074 074 or – unlike most no-frills airlines – through a travel agent. Best of all, the offer is valid until the end of September. The catch? No travel on Fridays or Sundays, and you must stay away for two nights.

Bargain of the week 2: Paris or Amsterdam for £10
After our story last week on London to Dublin for £9.99, Eurolines (0990 143 219) has extended its silly-deal strategy to include Paris and Amsterdam by coach for a tenner (each way). You must book a fortnight in advance and complete travel by 28 March.

A likely story: "Prices include tax and new UK Passenger Service Charge" – Debonair advertisement
The prices are good: Barcelona, Madrid, Rome or Munich for £99, through the Luton-based low-fare airline (0541 500 300). But the assertion about the "new UK Passenger Service Charge" is tosh. To reiterate the story we have been monitoring closely for several weeks: there is no new charge.

British airlines are pretending that there is, but in fact it is simply one of the existing payments made by airlines to airports. Neither have the airports increased their fees to airlines, but carriers are pretending that they have. It will be interesting to see if the Chancellor notes how easily the airlines seem to have got away with back-door fare increases, and decides to raise more revenue by increasing Air Passenger Duty in the Budget on 9 March.

Trouble spots: How to survive an avalanche
Defensive action is difficult, but advice from the *International Mountain Rescue Handbook* (Constable, £18.99) may help to save your life:
1. Plunge an ice axe into the undersurface, to keep you near the top of the slide.
2. Shout; others may hear or see you.
3. Run to the side, or jump upslope above the fracture.
4. If the avalanche includes a hard slab, try to stay on top.
5. Get rid of rucksacks, skis etc.
6. Try to roll out of the debris.
7. Swimming motions sometimes help, sometimes not. Keep a hand over your nose and mouth, to help you to breathe.
8. As the avalanche slows, you may be able to get some purchase on the debris. Make a desperate effort at least to get a hand through the surface.



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Snowdonia may be very cold and wet in winter but it's a magnificently desolate and invigorating place. By **Laura Ivill**

Stairway to Welsh heaven

As we pulled into the deserted car park opposite the end of the Watkin path leading up to Snowdon, I pulled on my layers of winter walking gear. As my Brasher boots went over fluffy socks, I thought back to the last time I was here, in 1993. I had hobbled down the path after climbing Snowdon in complete agony, my Nike so-called walking boots (which I'd bought to go clubbing in) having rubbed my heals raw. Unbelievably, I then took them to the Lake District the following New Year and twisted my ankle leaping across a snow-covered stream. It was at this point that I invested £100 or so in a pair of boots that are so light and comfortable you'd hardly know you had them on.

I decided to try them out on an off-season weekend break to Snowdonia with my boyfriend, Tim. At this time, the roads are almost empty, and the countryside is not jammed with day trippers. The weather can be unpredictable, but when you end up in a hostelry with a blazing log fire and a glass of good stout after a day in magnificently desolate, wild terrain, you'll vow never to go in summer again.

Our first day's climb to the summit of Yr Aran at 2,451ft (747 metres), was a delight. First the gentle stone Watkin path led upwards past a stream and a waterfall; then, in an instant, we were into the barely lifting, thick morning mist. We had springy grass underfoot all the way and suddenly, at around 1,500ft, we popped up through the mist to witness stunning views of the Snowdon Massif, right across to Crib Goch; a rare treat since Snowdon is almost invariably shrouded in clouds.

The next day's walking couldn't have been more different. We were promised rain, rain and more rain, with 35 knots of wind, and sleet on higher ground. Undeterred, we planned to climb Glyder Fawr at 3,278ft (999 metres). Thanks to an EU-funded enterprise to create a nature reserve here, some kind souls had laid a granite path around the lake and part-way up the mountain. Although you get a good grip walking on granite, it hurts like hell if you bang a shin or an elbow on it. An elbow? Well yes, the path gets so steep in places that you have to clamber up and down great stone steps in whatever undignified manner you can. In this lonely landscape we were both reminded of the stone stairways in *The Hobbit*.

We approached Glyder Fawr via a steeply rising pass: waterfalls on either side cascaded down the sheer cliffs like great weeping wounds. Standing on huge boulders with the water crashing down around us we paused to admire the drama of the moment – and, more unexpectedly, the smell of toast. Even in such a wild sort of place as this, the smell was so distinctive that we knew it must really have been someone making toast. Sure enough, further on a huddle of walkers had found a cavern, and were sheltering from the wind and rain enjoying a snack.



The rocky Watkin path leads you gently past stream and waterfall to the springy grass beyond and a great view of the Snowdon Massif *David Hughes/MSI*

As we ascended higher, past another tiny tarn, the ambience quickly changed as we found ourselves in thick, eerie cloud. In fierce conditions such as these, with bitter cold from the extra height, deteriorating visibility and the possibility of exhaustion, you suddenly become a winter mountaineer. The danger of getting separated and lost is a real threat and I had to call out to Tim to slow down before he disappeared into the swirling clouds. I was struggling; the mountain was steep and featureless; the wind was driving freezing rain right through my ancient Gore-Tex jacket and stabbing at my exposed face. We passed a few anonymous waterproofed bods, and I thought that if couples enjoy this kind of leisure activity together they're probably very well suited.

Tim and I are incompatible walkers in this respect; I like to spend a little time, at least, looking around at the view, whereas he measures the success of a trip by its time-to-distance ratio. Mostly he remains just within shouting distance ahead. But, to be fair, today there was no view, except of his faint outline.

The worst thing for me about climbing in cloud is not just that you can't see where you're going; it's that you can't see how far it is to the top. As I became exhausted on Glyder Fawr, determination was the only thing that kept me going – that and the fact that Tim had the compass, the water and the chocolate. Dragging myself up through the driving rain, I knew that the summit must be near. For the last half an hour I'd been wondering how much further it could be. Surely it must be here? Then I saw a huge dark object looming out of the cloud, and my heart sank. "No." I gasped. "It goes on and on. I'm not going any further." "We're here." Tim shouted back. And so we were.

A great jumble of boulders marked the dramatic top of the mountain. As I poked my head up over the top, the clouds roared in my face like the steam from a great boiling vat. Huddling behind these rocks we finished the water and crunched on cold chocolate. That evening we dined in the Ty Gwyn restaurant. I felt I had spent the better part of the day inside a washing machine, but it had certainly been invigorating.

Laura and Tim stayed in the Snowdonia National Park at Aberconwy House in Betws-y-coed (01690 710202). B&B accommodation costs £20-£26 per person per night. The Ty Gwyn Hotel & Restaurant can be contacted on 01690 710383. For information, call the Wales Tourist Board on 01222 499909

Rhythms of the steel city

Sheffield, site of the new National Centre for Popular Music, has a rich rock'n'roll heritage. **David Sandhu** takes a tour of some of the city's musical landmarks

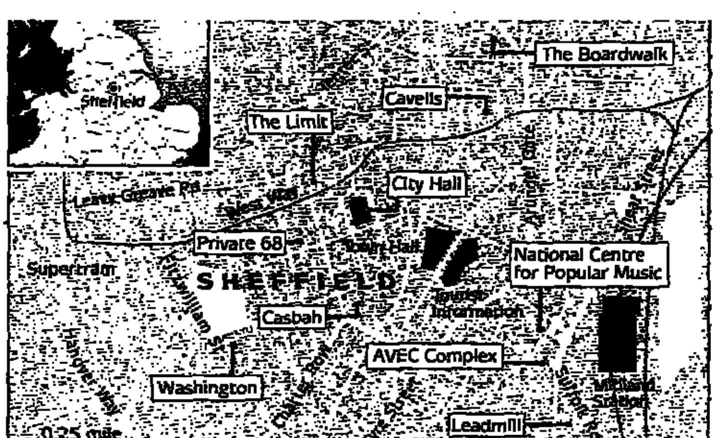
"Oh we don't look the same as you, we don't do the things you do, but we live round here too." ("Mis-Shapes", Pulp 1995)

I SPOTTED it – couldn't miss it, really – immediately after exiting Sheffield station: a metallic mothership docked in the city centre. The National Centre for Popular Music, which opens on Monday, consists of four stainless steel "drums", each containing an interactive pop "experience". There was nothing like this when I was a student at Sheffield Poly (1987-90). In my day, we had to invent our own interactive pop experiences.

The National Centre should certainly be top of the pops for school trips, but I was more interested in reacquainting myself with the rich vein of musical talent mined in Sheffield over the years. They built this city not just on steel and coal, but also on rock'n'roll.

Opposite the National Centre is the AVEC complex which houses Red Tape Studios, financed by Sheffield City Council as a kind of Open University for local music wannabes (it gave BabyBird their first start); Steelworks recording studio, used by luminaries such as The Spice Girls, Bryan Adams and Robbie Williams; and the HL (Human League) studios.

Just around the corner, The Leadmill's eau de stale ale recalled memories of undergraduate excess. This converted flourmill (a waterwheel remains beneath the club) is the city's best-known venue. Back in the early Sixties, The Esquire Club hosted the likes of Clapton, Hendrix and Jagger upstairs in what are now the Leadmill offices. It was the first venture by a Mr Peter Stringfellow and you can almost still smell lingering traces of the Sheffield impresario's aftershave.



Shaun Ryder of Happy Mondays cited The Leadmill as the venue of one of the best gigs he ever played. However, I remember it as home of one of the best gigs he never played. The Mondays' hedonistic nature got the better of them backstage one night and they forgot to play, somehow carousing their way home before anybody noticed.

More drunken foolishness occurred above the Sven sex shop (now Private 68) on trendy Division Street in 1985. It was at this ironically hardcore location that Pulp's Jarvis Cocker fell from a second-storey window while attempting to impress a girl at a party. He fractured his pelvis, broke his wrist and ankle and spent six weeks recuperating in hospital, perhaps figuring that becoming famous might be a less painful seduction tactic. But that would take a further eight years to achieve.

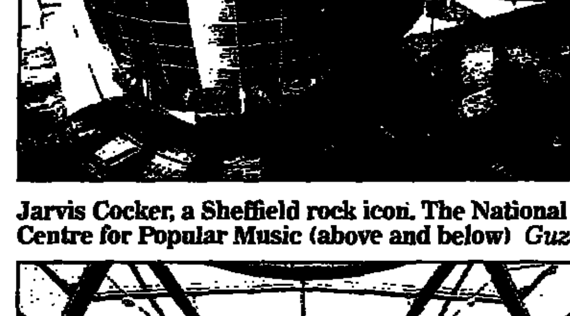
A hundred yards away, on West Street, The Hallamshire Hotel, once a lively drinking den that hosted many of Pulp's early gigs, remains in name, if not in spirit. The Beehive, the bunker from where ABC, Heaven 17, Thompson Twins, Cabaret Voltaire and Human League would plot world dominance, is now a Firkin pub. And The Limit, a tiny subterranean club that was pivotal to Sheffield's golden epoch of electronica (1979-1984), is no more, demolished and replaced by a Job Centre. Throughout the Eighties, The Limit hosted embryonic line-ups of local heroes as well as guests such as U2, Simple Minds and Orange Juice. Famously, Jarvis Cocker once played while still in his wheelchair.

A Limit tribute night takes place every Thursday at the Casbah (formerly The Wapentake), itself a rock pilgrimage site for long-haired lovers of the city's biggest music exports, Def Leppard, and run by an ex-roadie of the heavy metal gods.

Passing the pleasantly dull Cavells pub on High Street (where at the then Crazy Daisy disco in 1980, Phil Oakey recruited two under-age girls, Susan and Joanne, to the Human League), you reach the Goth-black Boardwalk on Snig Hill. The Boardwalk (then known as The Black Swan and nicknamed "The Murky Duck") saw The Clash's début gig in 1976. Judging by its forthcoming attractions (Spear of Destiny, The Meteors), old punks never die on Snig Hill. And to include the Boardwalk's owner Herbie Armstrong among these rock relics may be a bit harsh – but then he is the ex-guitarist of Van Morrison's band.

The career of Joe Cocker, one of the city's veteran rockers, took off after supporting the Rolling Stones (as Vance Arnold & The Avengers) in 1963 at Sheffield City Hall on Barker's Pool, a taupe-coloured Art Deco colossus. The austerity of the building has always been tempered by the reams of fan graffiti adorning its exterior. I recall that Bros played their first major gig here in 1988, turning Sheffield into a pre-pubescent Nuremberg rally, and covering the City Hall in marker pen and lipstick.





Jarvis Cocker, a Sheffield rock icon. The National Centre for Popular Music (above and below) *Guzelian*



A mile or so east, the undulating landscape of Weston Park is familiar to both myself and Jarvis Cocker: he famously lost his virginity among the daisies and I, anonymously, used to revise on the benches. Old boys from nearby Sheffield University include Martin Fry of ABC and the comedian Eddie Izzard.

And so to the Washington. A decade ago this back-street boozer was home to a crowd of *NME*-reading students like myself, and amiable old men drinking mild. Now the venue, part-owned by the Pulp drummer Nick Banks, has become what the Beehive was back in the early Eighties – both nerve-centre for networking muso types, and a relaxed place to enjoy a pint of Tetleys. Robbie Williams has been known to throw an occasional dart here and pop memorabilia, mostly local, cheers its walls – but Hard Rock Café this isn't.

After six hours of vicarious pop thrills, I mused that Sheffield's village-like atmosphere, its friendliness, informality and overall tolerance, must have helped fuel the city's musical success. The lineage continues with Gomez, former Hallam University students who, after taking a demo tape into the Record Collector shop on Fulwood Road, Broomhill, were rewarded last year with the Mercury Music Prize.

Where else in the country would a student (me, 1989) regularly bump into a pop star (Phil Oakey of Human League) in the local chip shop (off Ecclesall Road)? The National Centre for Popular Music may have found the perfect locale.

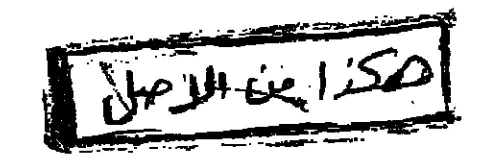
The National Centre for Popular Music opens on 1 March. Call 0114-296 6060 for information, 0114-296 2626 for bookings. There is a two-tier system for admission prices: the standard rate is for weekends, bank holidays and July and August: the off-peak rate (in brackets) applies at all other times. Adults £7.25 (£5.95); under 16s £4.50 (£4); students £5.50 (£4.75); families (two adults, two children) £21 (£18). Open 10am-6pm daily, last admission 3.30pm

JASPER REES



Most of Britain's worst pet owners have dogs. One had fed her Pomeranian to four times its natural body weight. The only thing it will now cross the room for is food. It is taken for walks in a push chair

IN THE WEEKEND REVIEW PAGE 32



Take a ride on a magic carpet

You can follow an instructor down the slopes of Vail, Colorado, without ever leaving London. By Stephen Wood

The film *True Lies* is dreadfully silly. But even if you walked out of it, you will have caught the early scene where Arnold Schwarzenegger escapes through a forest from gun-slinging snow-mobilers and skiers. During the sequence, the camera seems to run alongside Schwarzenegger; in fact it ran along a suspended line of cable, a piece of cinematic trickery called Cablecam devised by an American cameraman, Jim Rodnunsky.

What does this have to do with skiing? The answer is that Rodnunsky adapted his Cablecam technique for an ambitious ski- and snowboard-tuition machine, which has recently arrived in the United Kingdom.

Rodnunsky's Metroski simulator combines a skiing surface, on a platform whose pitch is controlled by hydraulic rams, with a video system which shows footage of a "ski-instructor". Rodnunsky erected cable runs at the resort of Vail in Colorado, and a camera attached to them was used to film skiers – from behind – as they went down the piste. These sequences, shown on a screen in front of the platform, allow pupils to follow the skier and imitate his technique just as they would a ski-instructor on the slopes.

The simulator will be formally launched in the UK at next week's European Fitness Convention at Earls Court. But during the first two months of this year it was installed at the Chiswick Riverside health and sports club; while it was there I took the opportunity to ski down the slopes of Vail.

Beginners start on the smaller of two platforms, a sort of nursery slope which pitches forward to create the angle of "descent"; having mastered the skills involved, pupils move on to the red run, a bigger platform which can also pitch laterally. Before climbing up on to the beginners' platform I put on boots and skis and was strapped into a harness: this attaches to a cable hung above the Metroski and, in the event of a fall, the tug on the cable automatically stops the machine and returns the platform to a level position.

The platforms are covered with carpet: it is fine, silky stuff but since it has far more grip than snow, the skis have a special coating to help them glide over it. At the centre the carpet is a continuous roll; and when my instructor – Peter Walker, marketing director of Metroski UK and a former member of the British ski-racing team – switched on the machine, the platform slowly pitched forward and the carpet began to roll up the slope.

Skiing in the same spot while the earth moves for you is not a natural sensation. But cajoled by Mr Walker, I began to experiment with a snowplough position, until I found one which kept me sliding downwards at the same speed as that of the carpet coming up. By the time Mr Walker had switched on the video, I was doing "turns" from side to side of the carpet roll, beginning to appreciate the virtues of the Metroski.

Like other artificial surfaces, the carpet is less forgiving than snow but responds well to good technique. Mr Walker set about perfecting mine: to stress the need to keep my upper body facing down the slope while my skis moved diagonally in front of me, he advised that in the correct position "you don't crap on your skis". Perhaps it was a metaphor; or perhaps I just looked more alarmed than I was. The big platform increased my anxiety, particularly when Mr Walker selected a dramatic downhill sequence, and set the carpet roll to "fast". I couldn't keep up with the on-screen instructor – a problem with the big platform, since its lateral pitching is co-ordinated with the instructor's turns.

At the time, the lateral pitching seemed quite natural; later it occurred to me that while the forward pitch did simulate a ski slope, there were no real-resort conditions which the lateral pitch replicated. Mr Walker explained that "the skis don't bite into this surface as sharp edges will in snow, so the surface has to be tipped from side to side".

The technology to do that – and the Metroski's other tricks – costs a lot of money: Metroski UK is selling the simulators in Europe for £75,000. A lesson on the Metroski doesn't come cheap either, at £34.99 for an hour. Is it worth it? If the alternative is a dry ski slope, the answer is yes.

If you want to try it, there will be a Metroski at the Riverside Club in Northwood, Middlesex from 6 March. And I can at least guarantee that you will find it more fun than sitting through *True Lies*.

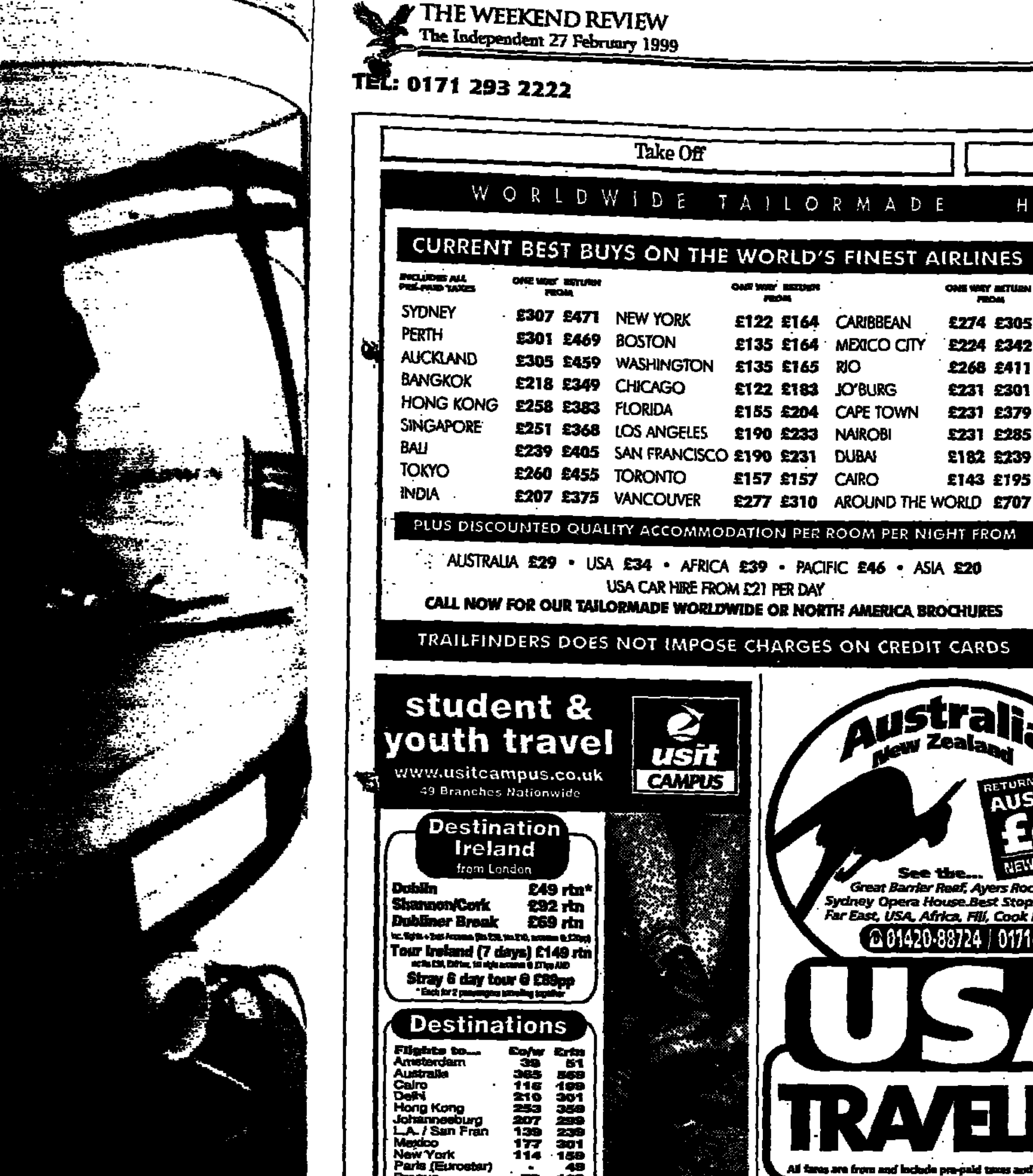
The Riverside Club, Northwood (01923 848000): the Metroski is available for use by non-members. Metroski UK (0171-323 0240)

Ski holiday advice, page

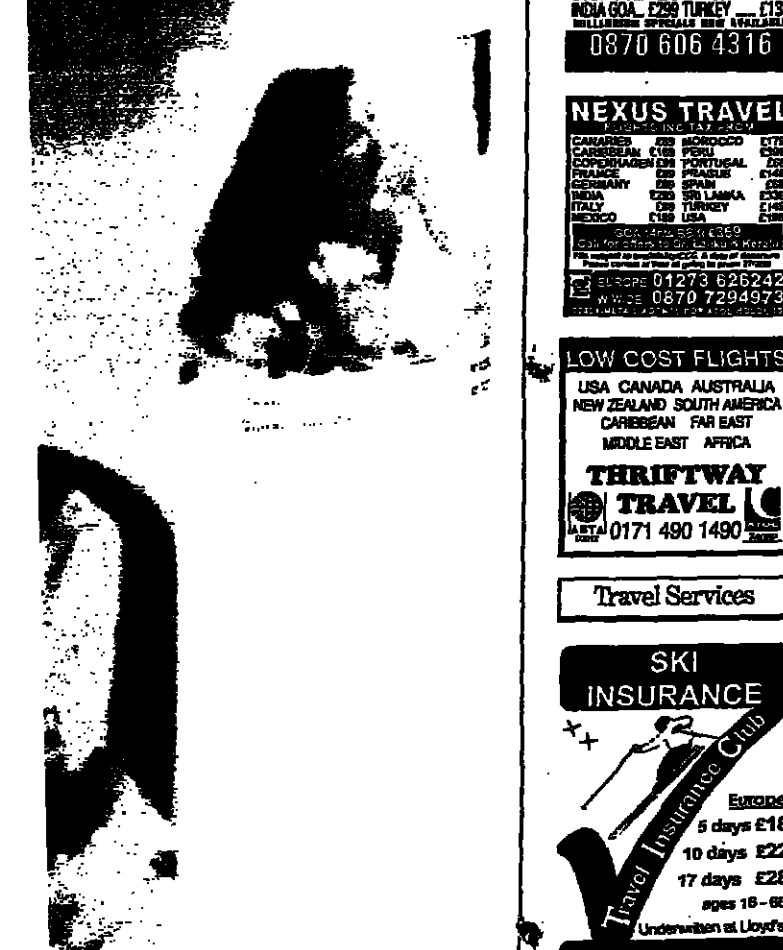
The Metroski simulator's carpet grips harder than snow and responds well to good technique *Phil Meech*

Resort	Area open	Comment	Slopes (cm) Lwr	Upr	Last snow	Temp	Forecast
ANDORRA							
Soldeu	100%	Great conditions	100	110	22.02	-5C	Variable
AUSTRIA							
Ellmau	100%	V. good high up	110	210	24.02	-5C	Settled
Hinterglemm	100%	Great conditions	120	300	24.02	-4C	Settled
CANADA							
Tremblant	95%	Granular snow	65	140	25.02	-13C	Cloudy
FRANCE							
Meribel	96%	Great conditions	140	230	24.02	-3C	Clear
Les Arcs	95%	Blue skies	225	345	24.02	-5C	Variable
ITALY							
Arabba	100%	Good conditions	65	100	24.02	-10C	Light snow
SCOTLAND							
Glencoe	100%	Fresh snow	35	55	23.02	-1C	Windy
BULGARIA							
Pamporovo	100%	Good conditions	75	180	23.02	-3C	Changeable
SWITZERLAND							
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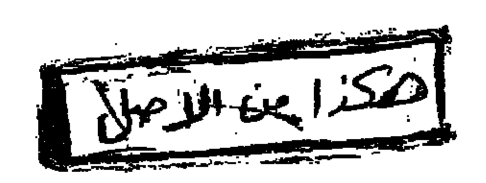
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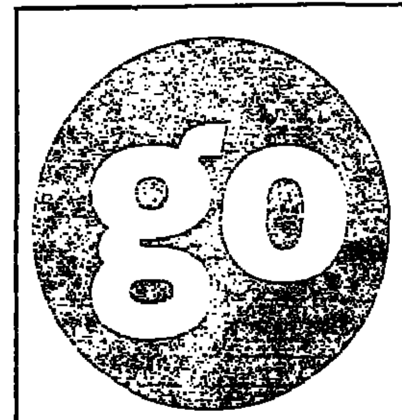
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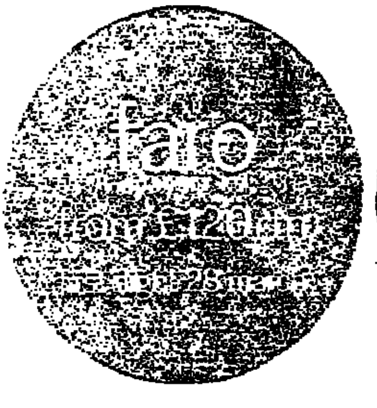
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Following in Sartre's footsteps

A black polo neck and a map is all you need to make this philosophy pilgrimage around Paris's Left Bank. By **Julian Baggini**



If all this talk of philosophy leaves you reaching for a coffee and a packet of Gauloises, head to Café de Flore to join in the monthly discussions *Hulton Getty*

Along with the artists of Montmartre, the Eiffel Tower and Notre Dame, one of the most enduring images of Paris is the café-dwelling, black-clad existentialist, smoking Gauloises and offering up the occasional *bon mot*. But there's more to Paris and philosophy than existentialism and some overpriced cafés. If you're planning a trip to Paris and want to find out more, set aside a few hours for a walk along the philosophers' Rive Gauche.

Begin at place Saint Germain-des-Prés, easily reached by the Métro station of the same name. This square lies on boulevard Saint-Germain, whose cafés were once the prime meeting-places of philosophers and intellectuals, but which now, sadly, is more renowned for its traffic and tourists. On the north-east side of the square lies Les Deux Magots, possibly the most famous café in Paris, and one-time favourite haunt of the French intelligentsia. The café's reputation is a little misleading, however, for existentialists such as Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) and Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) in fact preferred to take their caffeine next door, at the Café de Flore. And far from being idle chatterers, philosophy's glamour couple sat at separate tables, diligently writing their influential works. Philosophy of sorts still happens here during the monthly English-language *café-philosophique*, where anyone can walk in and take part in a philosophical discussion.

Given the prices, this is perhaps not the best place for a rest, so cross over the square to Paris's oldest church, Saint Germain-des-Prés, which dates back to 542, though most of its features, including the tower, were added in the 12th century. It contains the tomb of René Descartes (1596-1650), arguably the most important figure in modern western philosophy. The interior of the church is relentlessly gloomy, and the monument to Descartes surprisingly modest.

Opposite the church, walk along rue Bonaparte for a few minutes until you get to place Saint-Sulpice. Here you will find Visconti's fountain and, more pertinently, the Café de la Mairie. Sartre and Albert Camus (1913-60) met here for the last time in 1951. Having worked together on the radical left-wing newspaper *Combat*, the two fell out, never to meet again. The café was also a favourite meeting-place for Paris's many literary émigrés, such as Hemingway, Fitzgerald and Beckett.

Walk around to the back of the church that lends its name to the square and then turn left down rue de Seine, crossing boulevard Saint-Germain, until you come to another café, La Palette. A haunt of students from the Beaux Arts school since the beginning of the century, this was another favourite of Sartre and de Beauvoir. Set on a reasonably quiet cross-roads, this is one of the better of the historical cafés to stop off at, especially if you get one of the outside tables. Any café you stop at is going to be pricey, and this is about as atmospheric as you're going to get on the modern-day Left Bank.

Continue along rue Callot and then turn back towards boulevard Saint-Germain along rue de l'Ancienne-Comédie. Here you'll find Paris' oldest café, La Procope, which first opened in 1686. This became a focal point for many in the French enlightenment, foremost among them Denis Diderot (1713-84). Influenced by the English empiricist John Locke, Diderot's radical ideas foreshadowed much later theories such as evolution and eliminative materialism, and it was here at La Procope that Diderot and D'Alembert first conceived the *Encyclopédie*, a landmark in scholarship but also a challenge to the authority of the Catholic church.

Rejoining the boulevard Saint-Germain, continue along, before branching off to the right along the rue Ecole de Mede, turning into the rue des Ecoles. Apart from the gloriously tacky Boutique Descartes, you will come to the Sorbonne, one of Europe's oldest and most distinguished universities, where Sartre and de Beauvoir were both students.

La Palette
Les Deux Magots and Café de Flore
La Procope
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Rue Seine
Rue Bonaparte
Blvd St Germain
Blvd St Michel
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Rue des Ecoles
Rue Monge
PARIS
Sorbonne
Rue St Jacques
Place de la Contrescarpe
Pantheon
Café de la Mairie
Place St Sulpice
Rue Soufflot
R de l'Estrapade
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To Montparnasse cemetery, one mile

Turn right on to the rue Saint-Jacques and continue up until you come to the rue Soufflot. At the end of this road stands the imposing sight of the Panthéon. Originally commissioned as a church, on its completion in 1790 it was turned into a shrine for France's great and good by the Revolutionary Assembly. The crypt contains the remains of the political philosopher, author of *The Social Contract* and guiding light of the French Revolution, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78). A statue of Rousseau also stands, incongruously, in the car park outside, as ignoble a site to remember him as the Panthéon itself is impressive. Others buried here include Voltaire and Zola.

Walk away from the Panthéon, to the right, until you get to rue de l'Estrapada. Follow this along to the left for a few minutes and you will arrive at the place de la Contrescarpe. This delightful square, with a calming central fountain, is quieter than a lot of the more central locations and provides the ideal spot to sit around and soak up the atmosphere.

You may wish to end your tour here, but one sight remains which the dedicated philosophy pilgrim would not want to leave out: the joint grave of Sartre and de Beauvoir. Hop on the Métro and make your way to Raspail station, or you can walk via the green and pleasant Jardin du Luxembourg. Tracing your steps back to the Panthéon, follow the rue Soufflot to the boulevard Saint-Michel. Turn left along this road for about 500 yards until you see the entrance to the Jardin on your right. When you leave the Jardin at the opposite end from the Palais, follow the narrow green stretch of avenue de l'Observatoire. When it turns to road, carry along and then turn right along the impressive boulevard du Montparnasse.

A left turn along rue Huygens at the junction with boulevard Raspail will take you to the entrance of the cemetery, where a free map is available at the warden's lodge. To find Sartre and de Beauvoir's modest gravestone, just turn right inside the gates, and you will find it barely half-a-dozen graves along.

The walk starts at Métro St-Germain-des-Prés (line 13) and should take between two hours and a whole day depending on how long you stop off along the way and whether you decide to walk to the Cimitiere Montparnasse

So, what's on the menu in Paris?

One of the best reasons for a trip to the French capital is that it's usually punctuated by unforgettably delicious meals. But just think if you could reproduce them on your return... By **Margaret St John**

IN THE middle of my first cookery lesson with Françoise Meunier in Paris, Miko, a Japanese "office girl" escaping the drudgery of her job in Tokyo, clasped her hands across her chest and squealed in halting French: "I am so happy!" Her friend giggled in a shy, embarrassed way and then quickly took her camera out of her bag to capture a picture of the *pot-au-feu* (stew) on the table. Picture taken, we all sat down to eat the three-course lunch that we had prepared, each armed, of course, with a glass of wine.

Having lived in Paris for two years, I was bored with cooking the same old staples but, not a naturally gifted cook, I was looking for inspiration. The whole concept of Françoise's courses really appealed. A bit like going into someone else's kitchen and learning from the cook, it is relaxed and informal. Although the lessons were conducted in French, Françoise speaks good English and happily translated for us as we went along.

The other advantage is that there are never more than six to a class (and more often just three or four). Françoise is popular among groups of friends who want to organise a lunch or an evening in advance. The Saturday lunch course, for example, is ideal for a group of friends visiting Paris for the weekend. The lunch will be delicious and the premises are conveniently located near the Bourse, within walking distance of many of the sights.

The menus are flexible and you can suggest particular dishes. On one occasion, Françoise received a fax from a group of friends wanting to do all the Indian cuisine recipes that had been printed in a newspaper's colour supplement, and she happily obliged. Another group, of Americans, booked an evening devoted to the scary topic of soufflés.

The mission is to plan a balanced meal with simple dishes, made with quality ingredients, served hot, on time and presented in an appetising way. To achieve this, though, a few basics must first be tackled. A generation ago, in France as in Britain, families passed on basic kitchen skills but sadly, modern life means that there is a substantial number of men and women who have had no such opportunities.

In this era of the supermarket, we have forgotten to ask for advice from the butcher or fishmonger down the street and Françoise stressed how important it is to have "a good relationship with the butcher". Unsurprisingly, she organises trips to the local markets and has lists of favourite specialist shops.

A typical lesson lasts three hours and all students are introduced to each other. Your apron and dishcloth are waiting for you, along with a printed menu of recipes. Each dish and its ingredients are discussed in detail and then the three-course meal is prepared. Students weigh and measure, use the correct knife for cutting and peeling, whisk the egg white and cook the entire meal. While students are expected to do their share of tidying up and clearing away, there is no heavy-duty cleaning or washing-up. Françoise moved the business out of her home as it grew, so the new, purpose-built kitchen is bright and airy and she has an enviable set of pots, pans and utensils, and a larder of herbs and spices to die for.

Although I knew how to chop an onion, I learnt how to present things better – to top-and-tail and peel potatoes, turnips and carrots in a more uniform way so that they do look delicate and, as my daughter says, "prettier". I also picked up some tips on which wine to serve with which foods and I have some great new recipes that I am happy to try at home.

Françoise maintains you need to try a recipe about three times before you are familiar enough with it to be happy. Although nervous, I have invited four Parisians for dinner in two weeks' time. I wouldn't have dreamt of entertaining them before doing this course. I phoned Françoise this morning to ask her what she would suggest I serve with her unbeatable *boeuf bourguignon*. She suggested fennel with an orange vinaigrette and then to finish the meal off with a crème brûlée that has a hint of pistachio – all of which can be prepared the day before. Perfect.

The courses take place at 7, rue Paul Lelong, 75002 Paris (00 33 140 26 14 00) and cost Fr450 (about £45) per person, but Françoise is offering 'Independent' readers a special reduced price until mid-July of Fr400 (£40), including lunch or dinner with wine.

Other suitable courses include La Toque d'Or, which is run by an Englishwoman, Sue Young, at 55 rue du Varennes, 75007 Paris (00 33 145 44 86 51) where prices are similar to those of Françoise Meunier and the classes are in English. Marie Blanche de Broglie runs a pricier version from her home at 18 avenue de la Motte Picquet, 75007 Paris (00 33 145 51 36 34). Each course costs Fr700 (£70), but this does include a lesson on how to set the table

SIX OF THE BEST CULINARY COURSES

ITALIAN COOKERY Weeks run between May and October at three locations in Italy. How much cooking you do is your choice, and outings are included. The cost of £1,190 also includes insurance, flights, transfers, seven nights' full-board accommodation and tuition. There are also one-day courses at the Cirio Italian Kitchen in London, for £55. Call 0181-208 0112, or visit www.italian-cookery-weeks.co.uk.

COFFEE ADDICTS will love the half-day course at the Costa Real Coffee College in London. For £50 you learn about the origins and production of coffee (with tastings) before moving on to making up your own blends and learning how to make the perfect cappuccino. Then there's a tour of the roastery and lunch, and you get a goody bag to take home. Call 0171-840 2085.

TASTING PLACES has added Thailand to its range of cookery courses and now offers week-long courses in May and September at the Laem Set Inn, Koh Samui. Prices start at £1,200 including tuition, full-board accommodation and airport transfers but not flights. Call 0171-460 0077 or visit www.tastingplaces.com

COOKING WITH Class Ltd is run by Victoria O'Neill at Pyon House in Herefordshire. Her day-long courses include Australian cuisine, cookery for kids (or for men) and Classic French cooking. Prices start at £25 for a kids' class, and there will be b&b accommodation from April. Call 01432 830122.

OWNED AND run by chefs, the Drambuie Scottish Chefs centre opened in March last year in a hotel in Glasgow. Courses run between March and November, from two-hour demonstrations to week-long residential courses. Weekend courses cost £199. Fully booked until summer but, to book for later, call 0141-427 1106.

CLARIDGE'S BAR offers three-hour cocktail master-classes, and there are still places in May, June, July and September. The price of £50 includes a cocktail shaker, recipe booklet and certificate. Call 0171-409 6307.






THE SHOPPING FORECAST

Journey to the source

With its sweet-smelling hills, pretty towns, summery climate and sophisticated harbours, the Côte d'Azur is a favourite French holiday destination. If you are planning a trip to the area, then Grasse makes a welcome diversion from the bright lights of Cannes, Nice and Monaco, sitting propped up by rocky coastal hills and by the dramatic inland geography of the Gorges du Verdon.

Supposedly the centre of the world's perfume industry since the 16th century, Grasse was also once a centre for leather tanning; history has it that the connections with perfume began when Catherine de Medici set a trend for scented leather gloves.

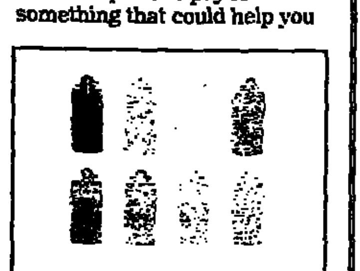
Today, the tanneries have gone but the perfume houses of Fragonard and Molinard remain, even if much of what they produce is made from imported flowers or chemical essences and the surrounding fields of lavender, mimosa, jasmine and roses have been sold to property developers.

Perfume-lovers should start their visit at the Musée Internationale de la Parfumerie (00 33 493 368020) and its garden of fragrant plants, but the public can also visit the Fragonard and Molinard factories to learn all about the perfume process and, of course, pick up some bargain essences – if you can brave the coach parties, that is.

Fragonard is open 9am-12.45pm and 2pm-6pm daily and has free factory tours in all European languages (call 00 33 493 364465 for details) as well as a shop. When I visited a few years ago, the best reason for being there was that many of the scents smelt very like popular commercial brands, but this is not an official strategy. If you want to buy perfume, Soleil is the latest Fragonard blend to choose. In France, it costs from FF250 (about £26) for 100ml of eau de toilette, but you can also buy it via mail order in the UK (00 33 492 423434) for about £36, including packing. Buy 10 bottles in France, and you'll be able to use the £100 you save to treat yourself to a weekend away later on in the year, thanks to easyJet's (0870 6000 000) return fares of £90.20 to Nice.

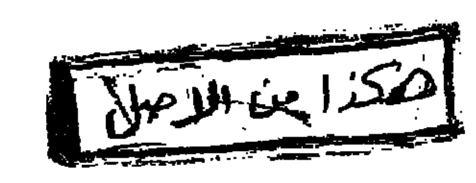
Gadget of the week

Advertised as the world's most advanced whistle, it costs £2.99 – a small price to pay for something that could help you



out of many a dangerous situation. The ultrasonic Fox 40 whistles are pea-less – which means that there are no moving parts to freeze or jam – and let out a piercing noise. They are already used by coastguards, skiers and mountain rescue teams, and are available in various colours from Ski Essentials (0171-831 5131).

RHIANNON BATTEN



THE WEEKEND REVIEW
The Independent 27 February 1999

One land, two cultures, three cuisines

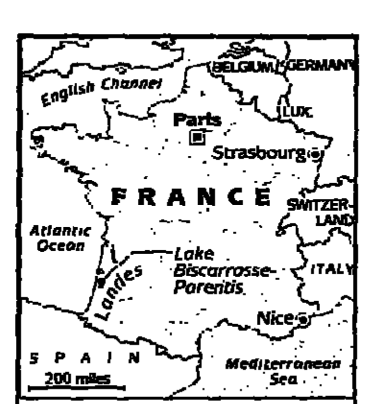
The Alsace's troubled history of occupation by both France and Germany has produced a distinctive culture to match its mountain scenery. By **Margaret Campbell**

I first arrived in Alsace on a cold January morning many years ago, *en route* from the winter sun of Nice to the joy of a friend's new baby in Stuttgart. Stumbling from the stuffiness of the night train into the frosty streets of Strasbourg, I headed for the cathedral and began to think I had missed the stop and was already in Germany. With the city's medieval, half-timbered buildings and bilingual street names, this was not the way France was meant to look.

Since then, I have got to know the area better and, as always, the reality is more complex. Geographical location and a troubled history combine to give Alsace and its people (some of whom have had to change nationality three times this century) a character all their own: France's third most important wine-growing region is where the "Marseillaise", that most Gallic of tunes, was composed in 1792, but it is also where the French government has transferred part of the prestigious ENA, Alma Mater of many a senior politician, from Paris. It has the highest number of gourmet restaurants of any French region but a Germanic reputation for hard work; most confusing of all, you regularly hear people start a sentence in Alsatian (the local Germanic dialect) then finish the thought in French.

Stretching south in a narrow strip from Germany to Switzerland, Alsace's natural borders are formed by the Vosges mountains and the Rhine. If you're travelling without a car, seeing the sights will take a little planning, but there are regular rail services to many of the small villages. Bikes can be rented in Strasbourg, and Alsace has more than 750 miles of cycle tracks.

A good place to start is Saverne, a small town just south of the Hagenau Forest and the North Vosges natural park. The centre boasts one of Alsace's prettiest houses, the restaurant Katz on Grande Rue. From there, you can cycle along a canal to Strasbourg.



Some people have changed nationality three times this century; sentences often start in the local German dialect and end in French

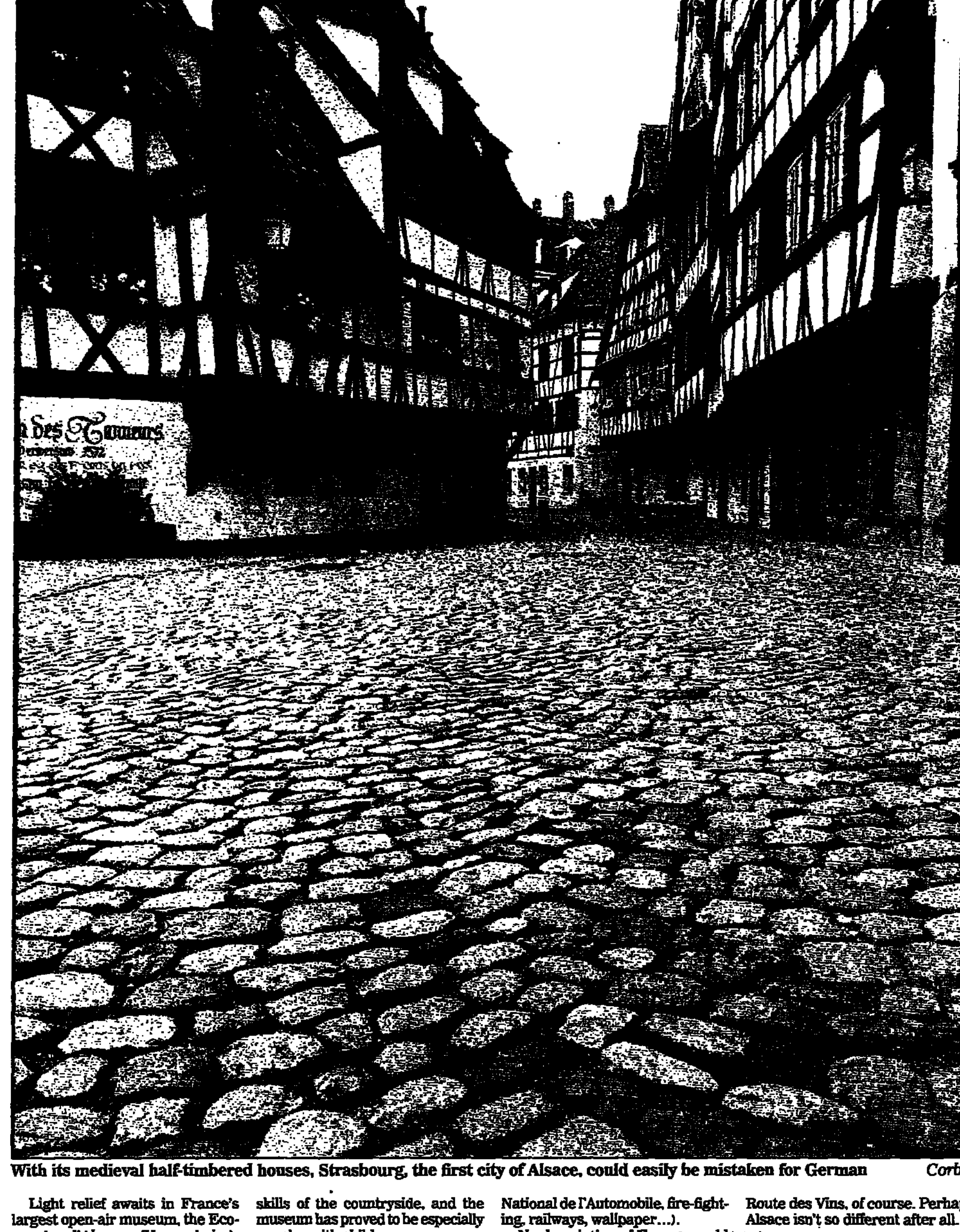
The city is home to a Gothic cathedral dating back to the 13th century, a host of museums (including a major new Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art), and a picturesque district known as "La Petite France". Take a boat along the canals, try rowing or stork-watching in the Park de l'Orangerie, or stand on the Barage Vauban for a superb view of the city, then turn your back and head for the countryside again.

The village of Obernai serves as a gateway to the Vosges mountains. Once the home of the dukes of Alsace, it has preserved a large part of its ancient ramparts with their semicircular tours, and the distinctive Corn Market. The tourist office provides details of well-signposted mountain walks nearby, graded for length and difficulty. One of the most popular leads to Mont St Odile, named after the daughter of a ninth-century duke of Alsace who built a convent for her here. It eventually became an abbey and place of pilgrimage. You'll find excellent views and a modestly priced *hostellerie*, run by a group of nuns.

Alsace has a strong ecology movement, and attempts are made to limit the effects of mass tourism on the mountains, particularly through its two nature parks, the Regional Nature Park in the north (recognised as a World Biosphere Reserve by Unesco) and the Ballons des Vosges Nature Park. However, both downhill and cross-country skiing are possible, particularly around Champ du Feu. If the snow has melted by the time you get here, there are ample opportunities for riding, rambling and other out-of-doors activities.

Back on the plain, the Route des Vins runs from Marlenheim, just west of Strasbourg, to Thann in the south – miles of fortified towns, beautifully kept villages, wine-tasting in small caves, and row upon row of vines. Seven types of wine are produced in Alsace's vineyards, including riesling, gewürzraminer and Tokay pinot gris, as well as sparkling *crémant*, and highlights of the route include Molsheim (where Bugatti cars were once crafted), the brightly coloured villages of Ribeauvillé and Riquewihr (to be avoided at weekends, but too beautiful to miss), and the Château of Haut Koenigsbourg, which sits perched almost 750 metres above the plain.

Alsace's second city is Colmar, less imposing than Strasbourg but perhaps more accessible. Some of the cobbled medieval streets are divided up into neighbourhoods named after the professional guilds that once ran them. Birthplace of Frédéric Bartholdi, who designed the Statue of Liberty, Colmar's "must see" is in the Unterlinden Museum, housed in a 13th-century Dominican monastery. I had seen pictures of the Issenheim Altarpiece, but its violent details are even more striking at close range.



With its medieval half-timbered houses, Strasbourg, the first city of Alsace, could easily be mistaken for German *Corbis*

Light relief awaits in France's largest open-air museum, the Ecomusée d'Alsace (Ungersheim). More than 50 structures from all over Alsace, including a fairground *merry-go-round*, have been dismantled piece by piece, moved from their original sites (where many of them were threatened with destruction) and carefully reconstructed here. Regular workshops demonstrate traditional crafts and skills of the countryside, and the museum has proved to be especially popular with children.

Further south, Mulhouse is a more industrial town than Colmar, and is dubbed the French Manchester owing to its textile factories. The model housing and pioneering welfare system are more reminiscent of New Lanark. Nowadays the town is worth visiting for its museums (printed textiles, the Musée National de l'Automobile, fire-fighting, railways, wallpaper...).

No description of France would be complete without mentioning the local cuisine. Here traditional fare tends to be hearty and filling: baeckeoffe is a marinated stew with vegetables and three kinds of meat, or choucroute. Tarte flambée is a lighter snack, and kougloff a sweet cake. All best washed down with a chill glass of Riesling from the Route des Vins, of course. Perhaps Alsace isn't so different after all...

Spring is celebrated in Strasbourg on 14 March, with floats, music and merry-making. Many other towns have carnivals too. For information on Alsace contact the Comité Régionale du Tourisme at 6 avenue de la Marseillaise, BP 219, 67005 Strasbourg (00 33 3 88 25 01 66) or www.tourismealsace.com

The lake in the Landes with the unlikely name

The Lake of Biscarrosse-Parentis is dotted with oil platforms and seaplanes buzz overhead, but it's also a kind of paradise. By **John Watkins**

A BACK-TO-NATURE holiday on a lake dotted with 28 oil platforms might seem like rather a perverse idea, but the Lake of Biscarrosse-Parentis in south-west France has never been shy of mixing its business with its pleasure.

Biscarrosse and Parentis-en-Born, the two Gascon towns that give the lake its cumbersome name, are pretty places; both have pedestrianised centres, and are well-stocked with shops, cafés and bars. Both also have significant industrial pedigrees.

In the Thirties, seaplanes operated by Air France Transatlantique took off from Biscarrosse for the 60-hour flight to New York, and the town remains an important centre for what the French call *hydraviation*. When oil came in the Fifties, Parentis-en-Born, on the eastern shore, became an oil town. Add to that a western coastline reserved for the army, and you have a strange mix of industry, the military, and tourism all centred on the one lake.

In fact, these un-touristy add-ons give the lake a welcome *frisson* and stop it from being too bland. If you lie on a quiet, sandy beach, you may hear the buzz of a seaplane; if you're out on the water on a wind-surfer or dinghy, there's nothing to stop you setting a course for one of the oil platforms. If the weather should turn misty, as it does from time to time, you can take shelter in the Museum of Petrol at Parentis-en-Born or the Hydroplane Museum at Biscarrosse. Both are worth a visit.

Surrounded on all sides by pine forests, the hinterland is as flat as a crêpe – the road from Parentis to Biscarrosse might as well have been drawn on the map with a ruler. Some people find the two-dimensional landscape off-putting but, personally, I rather like the unsettling uniformity. Although the forests are now criss-crossed with footpaths and cycle tracks, they too have their roots in commerce.

Until the middle of the last century, the Landes was a neglected, unvisited corner of France. Swampy, sandy and swept by gales, the land was so wet that the Landais shepherds used to go around on stilts. But, as a result of compulsory drainage and forestation, the Landes grew to become the largest pine forest in Europe, and resin from the trees, an ingredient in glue, made the area wealthy.

As demand for the commodity has faltered, the forest has had to adapt to a new world of leisure. The Landes now promotes itself as the ultimate outdoor playground, and its forests and lakes are ideal for hunting, fishing, cycling, swimming, walking, sailing and pony-trekking. In turn, the Lake of Biscarrosse-Parentis has dozens of campsites clustered around its shore, ranging from tiny *aires naturelles* to megasites with more than a thousand pitches.

If we parents had had our way, we might have chosen a smaller site, but with children of an age to be scandalised by the mere thought of sitting in a field contemplating nature, we settled for La Réserve at Gastes. Its 628 *emplacements* make it one of the largest campsites in Gascony and it functions like a village. Suburbs are made up of different companies' tents and static caravans, and La Réserve even has its own beach and marina.

Those who turn up with their own tents and camper-vans get pitches close to the lake. At night, Sunsites' red tents glow like brothels, but only Haven Europe has the nerve to give its tents names: Marge, Monica, Millie, in M-Section; Louisa, Larry and Lippy, in L. You can imagine the conversation back home: "Yes, we stayed with Marge this year; much more comfortable than Millie. We might try Monica next year – you know what they say, a change is as good as a rest."

On the plus side, hard-to-please children will approve of La Réserve's swimming-pools, crazy golf and the wide range of supervised sports on offer – be prepared to queue for the more popular ones. But it's at night when La Réserve really comes into its own. After the arguments over whose turn it is to wash up have subsided, the camp's large teenage population put on their glad rags and mingle outside the Salle des Jeux. At 9.30pm, there's a general rush for seats for the evening show.

But that's the great thing about the lake. You can have it both ways. If you crave company, you can hang around the pool or book yourself on one of the organised activities. When you've had enough of human beings, you can disappear into the forest.

One Sunday morning, we drove up to Biscarrosse to gawp at Europe's jet set, burning across the lake as they competed in the European Speed Skiing Championship. Then back to Parentis, just in time for a more traditional (and sedate) celebration of French culture – the Sunday market offers everything from local wine and cheese to north African drums and lethal Chinese bangers. Try the potatoes cooked in chicken fat for a delicious snack.

Later, we got on our bikes and cycled to Ste Eulalie-en-Born, a tiny village at the southern end of the lake. Here we ate ice-creams on a deserted beach, while ducks paddled serenely in the reedy shallows. Then back to Gastes for supper at l'Estanquet (a reservation is essential during the summer) where we were served *magrets de canard*, a delicious Gascon speciality, duck cutlet in cream sauce. Which just goes to show that in the Landes, you can have your duck and eat it.



The Lake of Biscarrosse-Parentis in the Landes is surrounded on all sides by pine forests and a hinterland that is as flat as a crêpe





48 hours ... in Singapore

You need a break – and a shortcut to the soul of a great city. Culturally straddling the East and the West, Singapore, suggests **Rick Bouwman**, is the perfect stopover if you want to eat, drink and sleep well

Why go now?

Modern Singapore is a rich and fascinating mix of Chinese, Malay, Indian and Western culture. While it has more than its fair share of sterile shopping malls, it is also a place where you can travel easily, eat and drink fantastically well and sleep with fewer worries than in many large European or North American cities, let alone Asian ones. In other words, it's perfect for a stopover.

Arab Street is a remarkably well-presented mixture of architecture

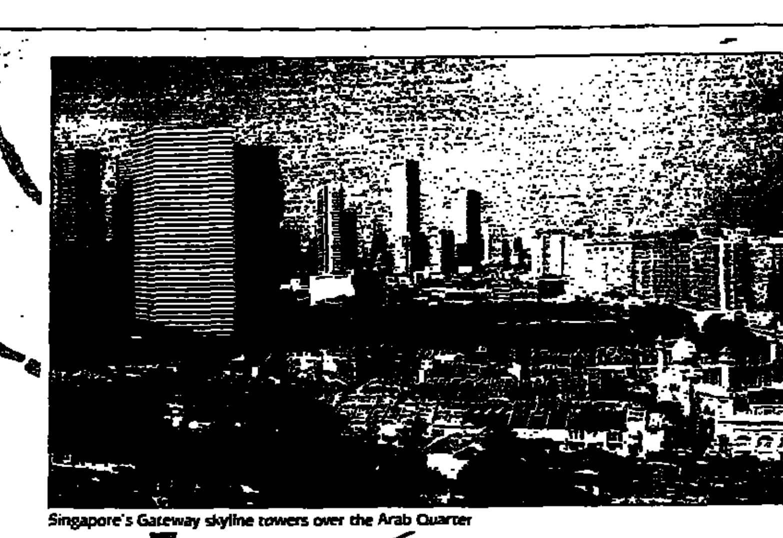
Get your bearings

Changi airport is a model of organisation. Tourist information is widely available. You can book a hotel at the Singapore Hotels Association booking desks in Terminals one and two. And there are free telephones which you can use to call anywhere in Singapore from the arrivals hall. English is spoken virtually everywhere.

Take a taxi from the airport – they're cheap (less than S$20, about £7), and the ride in will get you acquainted with the Singapore skyline. The city also has a good bus system; many of the vehicles are air conditioned and the fares are cheap (one trip 70 cents, but make sure you have the correct change). **The underground railway (MRT)** ❶ is fast, frequent, clean and air conditioned, and covers most of the city. At any station after 10am you can buy a Tourist Souvenir Ticket for S$7 (£2.50) which will take you everywhere on the system.

Lunch on the run

While in Little India, visit the **"Banana Leaf" restaurants** ❺ of Racecourse Road. Here you will find fish-head curry: a mountain of rice and pickles on a banana leaf, accompanied by a giant bowl of delectable curry sauce/ soup, in which sits the succulent head of sea bream. Not cheap (S$20, or about £7), but you'll never deprecate a fish head again. Elsewhere (or rather, everywhere) in the city, regional Chinese cuisines (Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Beijing, Szechuan), Malay and Indian food, as well as the local Peranakan or Nonya, are available. In Chinatown, the charming, open-air **Maxwell Road Food Centre** ❻ (one of the few old-fashioned "hawker centres" still in existence) offers a mind-boggling range of snacks, meals, juices and desserts from breakfast to late night. A true treasure trove for fans of Asian food. Relax, experiment and enjoy.



Singapore's Gateway skyline towers over the Arab Quarter

Take a hike to India

Along Rochor Road, you will come across the ultra-colourful entrance gate to **Serangoon Road,** ❹ the centre of Little India. This is the most chaotic and colourful precinct of Singapore: a wander down Serangoon will give an idea of the atmosphere of the subcontinent for those who have never been there, and a less stressful reminder of it for those who have.

Take a hike to Arabia

Singapore is not Paris. The climate and traffic make it unsuitable for strolling between neighbourhoods. But there are two historic, and somewhat atypical, precincts where you can spend a fascinating hour or two soaking up the atmosphere on foot. From **Bugis Junction MRT,** ❷ pass along Rochor Road and head towards the striking twin towers of IM Pei's remarkable **Gateway skyscraper:** ❸ turn left along Johor Road, and you will come to Arab Street. It's a remarkably well-preserved, old-fashioned shopping street and the centre of the Arab Quarter. Beautifully fitted old shops hold a rich array of silks and cottons from all SE Asia – bargain buys include excellent quality "sarungs" from India and Indonesia.

One of the 600 species in Jurong Bird Park

Window Shopping

Singapore is a paradise for shoppers: the range is enormous, the prices are good, the shopping centres and malls can be jaw-droppingly impressive. The main areas are Orchard Road, the Marina (where the Sun Tek Centre boasts the world's largest fountain, the Fountain of Wealth – what else?), the Chinatown Centre, and **Raffles Plaza.** ❼ One highlight is the **Lucky Plaza,** ❽ a huge collection of small shops right in the midst of the international-brand glitz of Orchard Road.

Bracing brunch

If you have been to St Andrew's Cathedral, it's just a short stroll to Raffles Hotel arcade where Ah Teng Bakery offers an excellent nasi lemak, the classic Malay breakfast, consisting of rice, preserved fish, nuts and vegetables. They also have a wide range of western cakes and pastries as well as good coffee and tea. Also nearby is the **CHIJMES centre,** ⑮ where restaurants and shops abound in a artfully restored former convent.

Beam down

Between them, British Airways (0345-222111), Qantas (0345-747767) and Singapore Airlines (0181-747 0007) offer six non-stop 747s a day between Heathrow and Singapore, making it possible to fit a weekend in Singapore between finishing work on Friday and starting again on Monday. You should not need to pay more than £400 through discount agents; for better value still, get to Singapore en route to Australasia for no more than £600 return. The cheapest deals are likely to be on Royal Brunei (0171-584 6660), which has a weekly one-stop flight.

An aperitif

The one and only place for an aperitif is the bar of **Raffles Hotel** ❾ (MRT Raffles Place), at 1, Beach Road (00 65 337 1886). The famous Singapore Sling (invented in 1915 by a Hainanese barman at the hotel) will set you back S$15 (about £5.50), but is worth it for the drink itself and the atmosphere of the venerable, but luxuriously renovated hotel. Be warned though, surf shorts and flip-flops don't fit the dress code

Sunday morning: go to church

It is possible to visit Hindu, Buddhist and Taoist temples as well as Christian churches. Unusually, visitors are also welcome at mosques (though not at prayer times) and most mosques will, almost uniquely in the Muslim world, admit women. In all religious buildings dress modestly, and in mosques remove shoes before entering. Try **St Andrew's Cathedral** ⑫ in the Colonial district for colonial ambience or visit **The Temple of a Thousand Lights** ⑬ (Buddhist), Singapore's largest temple, featuring an eight-metre high Buddha (easily accessible by bus along Orchard Road) and the **Sri Mariamman Temple** ⑭ (Hindu) in Chinatown.

The icing on the cake

If you are in Chinatown, one of the most amusing things to do is to visit one of the small pubs or bars and engage in a bit of karaoke – or at least listen. Don't visit the karaoke "lounges", where a beer can cost you S20 (£7). The best places are the small bars in temple or pagoda streets, often run by Filipinos, which are friendly and informal, and serve excellent cold beer.

A walk in the park

It's worth the trip to Jurong Bird Park, 20 hectares of open space in the newly developed western area of Singapore, which houses the largest collection of birds (600 species) in South-east Asia, and one of the largest in the world. Take the MRT to the end of the line at Boon Lay, and then a short bus ride will get you there.



Visit the bar of Raffles for the ultimate Singapore Sling

Demure dinner

The Blue Ginger ⑩ (97, Tanjong Pagar Road, 00 65 222 3928) is one of Singapore's best Peranakan restaurants. Peranakan or Nonya cuisine developed from the combination of food of the early Chinese settlers and that of the indigenous Malay people. Signature dishes at the Blue Ginger include ikan masak asam gulai (fish cooked in tamarind curry), ayam buah keluak (braised chicken with tumeric, galangal, lemon grass and Indonesian black nuts) and babi pontay (stewed shoulder of pork cooked in preserved soy beans and tamarind with cinnamon and bamboo shoots). A meal for two costs S$50-70 (about £18-25), plus drinks. Otherwise, the restaurants on the shoreline of the **East Coast Park** ⑪ provide superb seafood, with water views. Try the pepper crab.

Artistic treat

Although celebrations for Chinese New Year (16-17 Feb) and Celebration Singapore (which runs until 27 Feb) will have passed, there is still a plethora of cultural events to look forward to in 1999. Millennium Mania runs from June until well into next year, entailing a daily menu of special events, from art exhibitions and street festivals to Chinese opera. Details are available on the Singapore Tourist Board's excellent website (www.newasia-singapore.com).



Street festivals are expected to be part of Millennium Mania

GLOBAL AGENDA

Gelsenkirchen

If you missed out on Mervyn Peake's counter-culture trilogy *Gormenghast* in the Sixties, you've another chance to catch it in musical form in Gelsenkirchen this spring: Irmin Schmidt, founder of the avant-garde rock group CAN, has written a fantasy opera based on the trilogy, with a libretto by the English novelist Duncan Fallowell. Commissioned by the Wuppertal Opera, who premièred it last November, the three-act work is performed in English and tells of the rise and fall of Steerpike, a clever and charming kitchen boy who machinates his way to becoming the murderous tyrant of Gormenghast Castle.
Schillertheater NRW, Musiktheater Gelsenkirchen, Kennedyplatz, Gelsenkirchen, Germany (00 49 209 409 7200) to end of June, DM12-DM48

Boston

With a mission to "inspire, educate, entertain and empower" New England's Dance Umbrella company has brought some of the best contemporary dance from around the world to auditoriums in the region. Two highlights of the 1998-1999 season are Mark Morris's annual visit – with



accompaniment from the world-famous cellist Yo-Yo Ma this year – and Furioso, an evening-length work by Meryl Tankard, a former principal dancer with Pina Bausch's Tanztheater Wuppertal, who has been artistic director of the Australian Dance Theatre since 1993.
Various venues, Boston, MA, USA (00 1 617 824 8000) Mark Morris and Yo-Yo Ma, today and tomorrow; Meryl Tankard Australian Dance Company, 11-14 March, $23-$45

Milan

To mark the centenary of the first exhibition by the Viennese Secessionists, the Fondazione Antonio Mazzotta has organised "Gustav Klimt and the Origins of the Wiener Secession", a show that celebrates the work of those artists who revolted against what they saw as the conservative and constraining style of the time. As well as some 80 works by Klimt himself, there are nearly 200 works by such artists as Kolo Moser and Ferdinand Andri – plus works by some of the guest artists the Secessionists invited to participate in their shows, such as Toulouse-Lautrec, Van Gogh and Gauguin.
Fondazione Antonio Mazzotta, 50 Foro Buonaparte, Milan, Italy (00 39 0287 8197) to 16 May, L12,000

Frankfurt

The American video artist Bill Viola has consistently broken new ground with his tapes and installations, with many of his pieces being snapped up by museums around the world. Frankfurt has collated 25 of Viola's videotapes and 16 of his installations for this retrospective of 25 years' worth of his work, locating them at sites which have been selected because of their political, social or cultural significance. An added bonus is that all of the venues are within 10 minutes' walk of each other, giving a visitor to the city the perfect excuse for a foot-friendly museum-sightseeing tour.
Various venues, Frankfurt, Germany (00 49 69 212 37953) to 25 April, DM8-DM12

SHARON GETHINGS

24-HOUR ROOM SERVICE: ST DAVID'S HOTEL & SPA, CARDIFF

WALES IS stuffed to the brim with five-star rugby players – recent results aside – but until the opening of the St David's Hotel and Spa in Cardiff Bay at the turn of the year, the principality was as bereft of top-rated hotels as the English are of Eisteddfod gold medals.

The first five-star-rated establishment in the country is also the first hotel run here by Sir Rocco Forte and his family. The glass-and-white-metal building is well-placed for the Welsh Assembly that will swing into life in the middle of the year, and is already fully booked for the weekend of the Rugby World Cup Final in November.

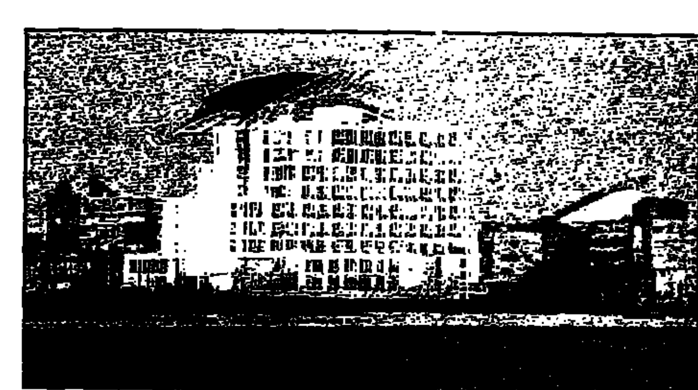
Designed by Sir Rocco's sister Aga, the hotel's décor is minimalist white and, like the hotel, seems to be aimed at the business person. Documents to scan at 3am? No problem! Need a hotel with a Japanese cultural liaison officer? *Dim* problem, as they say locally. Children to entertain? Could be bothersome. And leave Rover chained to the railings outside.

ARE YOU LYING COMFORTABLY?

Beds: 6ft long by 5ft 6in wide – guests apparently remark on how comfortable they are. The hotel has 118 rooms, plus 18 suites, the best being the master suites with separate work and relaxation areas.
Freebies: Toiletries by Quercus, plus fruit and flowers, minimalist of course – currently three tulips per room, so no chance of catching hay fever here. If you fancy a robe, it will cost £45.
Temperature: A thermostat in every room.
Bathroom: The usual range of essential porcelain products, and the bath took four minutes to fill. Greater attention has been paid to the bathrooms in bedrooms for the disabled: a sit-down, walk-in shower is complemented by a special sink, a railed toilet and lowered light fittings.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Television: The five main channels plus one Sky Sports channel, BBC News 24 and a movie channel. "We will have 40 channels of television by November 1999", says the hotel.
Radio: Radios 2, 3, 4 and the local commercial station.
Fax and Internet: A separate ISDN socket is provided near the desk in each room.
Phone: All local calls are free, but a three-minute national rate call will set you back £1.17.
Switchboard: Three calls at different times of day took 15 seconds or less to answer.



LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

The St David's Hotel & Spa, Havannah Street, Cardiff Bay, Cardiff CF1 6SD (tel 01222 454045, fax 01222 487056, e-mail: reservations@fivestar-htl.wales.com)
Transport: A frequent bus service into the city centre runs from two minutes' walk away, but there is also a limousine service.
Time to international airport: Cardiff Airport is 25 minutes drive away, with direct flights to Amsterdam, Brussels, Dublin and Paris.
Trains: The London Paddington to Cardiff Central service takes about two hours. The hotel is 10 minutes by taxi from the station.

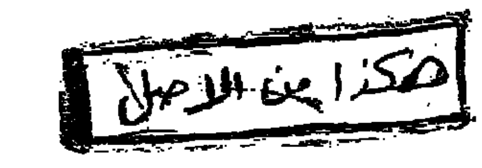
THE BOTTOM LINE

A double room, including VAT and service, costs £124 per night, with junior suites £250 and master suites £500. Breakfast costs from an extra £9.50 for Continental to £70 for a full champagne breakfast for two in your room. Dinner is taken in Tides Restaurant.

I'm not paying that: The special offer of £110 for single occupancy room with breakfast, and £120 for double occupancy with breakfast is available until the end of April. When the Spa opens on Monday (St David's Day), several other special packages will be introduced.

Still too much? The Cardiff Backpacker Centre on the other side of town (01222 345577) charges £12.50 per night for a space in the dormitory or £29 for two people in a private room.

LAWRENCE HOURAHANE



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RESPONSIBLY HEDONISTIC
Attractive, fit female, 33, seeks loyal man, with brains, SOH, hair and successful career, 32-40. London. ☎5149

ARE YOU...
...tall, craggy, 50ish, adjacent to north Bucks, fit but not fanatic, sensitive and humorous? If you like to walk, talk, play and have an idea or two, this artistic and eclectic woman, needs some loving. ☎5371

LATIN IS EXCITING?
Box 4161? Take 100? I rang you too late, so please call me! ☎5381

LOOKING FOR ENRICHMENT
Sociable, engaging, warm-hearted male, 34-38, required for sociable evenings, quality conversation and meaningful company. London area. ☎5391

INVESTIGATE LONDON
From smoky jazz bars to musty book shops. Female, 37, leading complicated life, seeks straightforward relationship, with chap, 40+. ☎5429

ARTISTIC
Well-travelled, mature female student, blonde hair, effervescent personality, seeks cultured male companion, 40-50, with bald/short hair and sparkling eyes, who loves life/travel. Any nationality. Surrey based. ☎5416

HI THERE!
Attractive, dark, artistic, divorced female, young-looking 44, teaches, writes, shops, enjoys good conversation, food, travel, films, theatre, music, varied tastes, seeking a warm, fun, intelligent man, similar age/interests. S Wales based. ☎5304

MAN FRIDAY
Attractive brunette, 27, enjoys conversation, theatre, music, cinema and good food, is seeking an honest, caring male, aged 26-33, for new adventures. London based. ☎5389

HOLDING OUT
Intelligent, attractive, slim, bubbly blonde, 30, 5'4", seeks slim, handsome, intelligent, sincere, honest, successful, professional white gentleman, 27-35, 6', athletic build, for happiness and long-term relationship. Herts/Bucks area preferably. ☎5211

SEEKING MILLENNIUM MAN
Attractive Midlands-based lawyer, 38, into tennis, dancing, cinema, theatre, seeks decent guy, who's interesting, lively and reasonably career-minded, to enjoy life and laugh with. ☎5318

EMPTY ROOMS
Intelligent, blonde single mum, 5'6", graduate, slim build, enjoys science fiction, rock music, offbeat humour, politics, animals, home life, seeking a deep-thinking, intelligent male, 35-45, for a fusion of minds. South Wales or anywhere. ☎5382

ATTRACTIVE PROFESSIONAL
Fun, serious, considered, reliable female, 27, with GSOH, enjoy dining in or out, music, singing, theatre, you name I'll try it. I'm seeking a special man to enhance my life. London. ☎5311

FIRST-TIME ADVERTISER
Attractive, educated black female, 37, N/S, likes travel and socialising, seeks tall 30-something male, any race/nationality, for friendship, possible romance. Must be genuine and caring. East Midlands area. ☎5390

PERSONABLE PROFESSIONAL
Slim, attractive lady, mid-40s, varied interests - cinema, travel, theatre, reading, dining out, seeking a gentleman, 48-55, similar interests, for friendship, possibly leading to more. London/Surrey based. ☎5319

STRONG BUT SWEET
Attractive, slim, lively brunette, 30, enjoy most things in life seeking a considerate and attractive man, to share evenings in/out with. London/Surrey ☎5265

CREATIVE & ATTRACTIVE
Intelligent female, mid-40s, green eyes, reddish hair, freckles, seeks similar mate, for fun and friendship. Sussex based. ☎5260

DOES THIS SOUND LIKE YOU?
Petite, professional lady, 30+, 5', GSOH, fun, likes travel, music, salsa, seeking a funny, professional, confident, caring gentleman, 30s-40s, to enjoy life with. Cambridgeshire area preferred. ☎5269

VINCE
Please call again, as details were lost. I would like to get in touch. Life's difficult in a call box. ☎4364

FIRST-TIME ADVERTISER
Professional, active single mum, 5'4", N/S, redhead, green eyes, likes outdoor pursuits, DIY, crafts, reading, theatre, eating in/out, seeks tall male, 45-55, N/S preferred, GSOH, nice personality, for friendship, possible relationship. ☎5276

SEEKING CREATIVE MAN
Slim, attractive brunette, 45, 5'4", independent, genuine, fun, positive. London and Surrey preferred. ☎4977

FRIENDLY
Practical, professional, petite female, early 40s, GSOH, loves weekends, work, staying in, nights out, seeks happy, affectionate, intelligent, solvent male, for friendship, possibly leading to relationship. South/central London area. ☎5280

ATTRACTIVE & INTELLIGENT
Black woman, seeks man, 50-60, any nationality, who, like me, feels at times it would be nice to share the simple things, like eating together, theatre and talking. London ☎5257

SOUL MATE FOR MILLENNIUM?
Lively, professional, single woman, mid-40s, seeks sorted man, 45-55, to share various interests, such as wining, dining, cinema, countryside, books, friendship and possible relationship. Cambridge area. ☎5283

ROMANTIC LIBRAN
Female, N/S, no ties, solvent, into antiques, films, yoga, loves life, travel, sunsets, seeks semi-retired, well-balanced male, solvent, who's slim, presentable and enjoys life. London. ☎5162

ARAB MAN SOUGHT
Italian, professional lady seeks professional Arab man, 30-35, preferably Iranian, Pakistani or Lebanese, for friendship and more. ☎5262

LOVELY LADY
Bath-based lady, aged 49, N/S, divorced, solvent, undomesticated, artistic, seeks caring, communicative, solvent male, 40-60, N/S, for walks, talks, laughs and cuddles. If you can cook, please ring me. ☎5299

OXFORD BASED
Tall, retired lady, 60, seeks unattached, N/S gentleman, 57-69, with comfortable lifestyle, car owner, for friendship and outings. ☎5281

HI THERE
Genuine, polite, attractive London woman, seeking a kind, sensitive, warm man, 40+, for friendship and love. ☎5298

LONDON LADY
Good-looking female, just 45, 5'4", GSOH, light brown/blue, self-employed, various interests, likes classical music, story-telling, theatre, travel, arts, swimming, horse riding, sailing, sports, seeks like-minded man. ☎5246

BLUE MOON
Kind, loving, sensitive, warm-hearted female, 37, attractive, creative, seeks male soul mate, of similar nature, 36-46, with GSOH, for special friendship/relationship. Herts area. ☎5101

EASTERN ENGLAND
Slim and attractive, independent woman, seeking a lively, energetic, professional man, N/S, into walking, countryside, sailing, films, theatre, must be emotionally available, 50ish. London and eastern England. ☎5196

ORIENTAL SPICE
Chinese female, 35, student, enjoys music, reading, films, travel, seeks a friend, 35-40, tall, slim, N/S, well educated. London area. ☎5102

BACK FROM ABROAD
Intellectual, active musical journalist, aged 36, slightly unconventional, Cambridge graduate, likes to laugh, seeks positive, well-travelled gent, similar age, to explore life. London. ☎4974

ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS
Articulate, athletic, artistic, amiable, attractive, professional woman, who is a funny, N/S, many interests, seeks similar male, in his 40s. West Midlands area preferred. ☎5278

FORMER JUNOESQUE BEAUTY
Now slightly faded, to attractive grandmother, 67, seeking a true male friend, GSOH, to share theatre, music, travel, metaphysics and a belief in miracles. NW Manchester. ☎5099

GERMAN FEMALE
Warm, caring, reliable, divorced female, young-looking 44, 5'7", medium build, copper/blue, attractive, two children, into reading, music, countryside, animals, cooking, restaurants, theatre, cinema, more, seeking a man, for a long-lasting relationship. London. ☎5147

ATTRACTIVE AND POLITE
Feminine Continental lady, early 40s, seeks cultured man, 40+, for friendship, possibly more. London. ☎5259

TRENDY LEFTY
Professional, tall, slim, red-headed woman, 40s, with strong Christian faith, into travel, music, DIY, cats, seeks compatible man. No right-wingers or paramilitaries please. London. ☎4971

LONDON WOMAN
Warm, bright and easygoing, young late 50s, likes travel, film, theatre, music, reading, walks, seeking a special man, sociable and emotionally alive/thinking, to share fun, friendship and whatever. ☎5142

PETITE BRUNETTE
Good-looking Russian lady, 34, seeks mature, reliable, sincere man, to start a long-term relationship, possibly leading to more. ☎5134

PERMANENT BLISS?
Slim, sparky, outgoing, attractive blonde, 43, likes good food/wine, Hampstead, family life, country walks, dislikes feng shui, jazz, smokers, seeks confident, amusing, intelligent chap, for permanent bliss. London. ☎5148

HI THERE
Female, 37, 5'6", dark/blue, slim build, enjoys sports, eating out, new places, seeks outgoing, successful, well-built, sensitive man, with similar interests. London. ☎4970

VIVACIOUS VEGETARIAN
Attractive, redhead, 38, green eyes, medium build, divorced, into animal rights, seaside, canoes, joss sticks, honest and fun, seeks attractive, happy, sensitive, animal-loving male, 35-45, Lincs. ☎4964

FIFTY BUCKS BELLE
Artistic, articulate, attractive, eclectic, energetic, intelligent, impulsive, outgoing, offbeat, omnivorous, undaunted, untypical, unfeasible female, seeks tall, N/S, sensitive man, with ideas. Milton Keynes. ☎4959

BRIGHTON BELLE
Paradoxical, assertive, altruistic, creative, caring, leo female, seeks charismatic male, brave enough to explore both the Amazon and the child within. ☎5048

BACK FROM ABROAD
Intellectual, active, music journalist, 36, slightly unconventional, Cambridge graduate, likes to laugh, seeks positive, well-travelled gent, similar age, to explore life. London. ☎4974

REAL WOMAN
Stylish London lady graduate, 30+, mixed race, warm, lively, arts oriented, seeks soul mate, 36-50. Oxford/London. ☎4843

VERY SMILEY
Single mum, 34, brunette, with merciless teenagers, seeking creative man, with library, who likes cats, can make me laugh, thinks laterally and isn't weird. Avon/surround. ☎4961

THOUGHTFUL COMPANION
Independent, Dawn French-type lady, 46, with intelligence, humour, and warm heart, likes books, gardens, teenagers, lakes, lively conversation, seeking congenial male company. Leicestershire area. ☎5083

HOLIDAY PLANS?
Professional female, 47, enjoys walks, badminton, dancing, the arts and of course holidays, seeks laughs and friendship with N/S male, 45-50, in the Bristol area. ☎4973

HEAD IN THE CLOUDS
Cancerian seeks black, capricorn academic, late 40s preferably, with more intellect than attitude, likes books, going to movies, parties, romance, loyalty, closeness, long conversation and you! London. ☎5143

MY OWN ARCHITECT!
Slim, attractive brunette, 45, 5'4", independent, genuine, fun, positive, seeks man. London/Surrey. ☎4977

ARTISTIC LADY
Divorced, blonde female, mid-40s, Hampton Court based, crazy SOH, loves arts, seeks like-minded, professional man. ☎4978

SHARE MY JOY OF LIVING
Fitness, music and intellect are three important strands in the life of this slim-built, active woman, 49. Essex/Suffolk border. ☎4979

SEEKING NEW LIFE ACROSS SEAS
Attractive female, early 30s, seeks tall, dark and handsome, caring, good-natured, solvent white doctor or similar, 30-40, with GSOH, who maybe also wishes to emigrate to, for example, Bermuda. Looking for 1-2-1 relationship. Herts area. ☎5044

WARM, INTELLIGENT WOMAN
Creative, successful, various interests, young 47, not slim, attractive, optimistically seeking a male soul mate. South London. All replies answered. ☎5156

ATTRACTIVE MALE
Would like to meet an intellectual female, for romance and relationship. ☎5431

IF YOU'RE LOOKING...
...this man has love to give. Humorous, professional male, 5'11", slim build, big bike, house in Oxford, likes vegetarian food, pubs, music, socialising. You want more? ☎5305

DIET PEPSI MAN
Musician, writer and lecturer, early 40s, slim, with own hair/viagra, seeks female soul mate, to share cafe society, city breaks and wild times. Brighton. ☎5372

ASIAN MAN
Very attractive man, enjoys most things, seeking a female, under 70. London. ☎5205

BRISTOL BASED
Caring, professional male, late 40s, 6', cosmopolitan, into spirituality, sport, good communication, honesty and empathy, seeking a feminine, warm-hearted female, to share our humanity with me. ☎5184

ASIAN SOUGHT
Tall, slim, intelligent, romantic, educated male, 56, into sailing, travel, reading, cinema, music and more, seeking an attractive, articulate, tactile Asian female, for friendship, maybe more. Notts based. ☎5379

NEW BEGINNING
Male, 50, wearing well, interest in arts, cinema, world travel, food, music, seeking a female, for happy times and a stable relationship. London. ☎5314

HONEST AND CREATIVE
Professional male, 39, into music, theatre, creative arts, seeks honest, caring female, 35-45. Essex based. ☎5316

TOWN/COUNTRY HOUSE
Quiet weekends beside beautiful beaches, offered to stressed, slim, professional London girl, aged 20-40, by handsome, romantic, slightly mad guy. South Wales based. ☎4976

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BE SENSIBLE: *We suggest that the first meeting always be held in a public place and that you do not reveal your full name, address or home phone number until you are comfortable doing so.*

HI THERE
Plymouth male, early 40s, GSOH, with an interesting job and a comfortable lifestyle, enjoys walking, sailing, cooking, music, cinema, theatre, arts and society, seeking a like-minded, fun-loving female. ☎5325

ONION FIELDS
Divorced male, 40, 6', no ties, seeks white, professional, sincere woman, for something special. South London. ☎5208

BRYON THE PHILHELLENE
Slim male, 50, seeking an amusing female partner, to share a journey to the oracle at Delphi this spring. Newcastle. ☎5312

SACRED UNITY
Active and creative, N/S, N/D world citizen, who's into spirituality, humanity, reality, wishes to share infinite space, with a tough, beautiful, independent, serene, stylish, successful and self-assured, un-tall, younger female, 30s. Europe. ☎5392

CALL ME
Professional chap, 39, 6'4", is seeking a lady, to share friendship, films and a love of the countryside. London, Bucks or Northants area. ☎5321

MANCHESTER MAN
Broad-shouldered, honest, reliable, mixed race man, seeks interesting female, 20+, with varied interests. ☎5204

CUDDLY OLDER WOMAN?
Honest and dependable, quite shy, caring country lad, 30, graduate, seeking an outwardly conventional, fuller-figured lady, 45-60, with a sense of the ridiculous, for close friendship. NW. ☎5323

FOR MEMBERS OF CARRY...
Bradshaw's Army, whether a general/foot soldier, a 38-year-old recently separated gentleman, is re-entering the dating war. Unsoiled by years of attrition and battle, I hope to capture someone's heart soon. London area. ☎5302

YOU HAVE TO ROLL THE DICE TO...
...get past go! Cardiff-based computer engineer, 42, dark, slightly overweight, attractive, seeking a warm, green-eyed redhead, probably graduate, slightly left of centre, into arts. Phone now to throw a six. ☎5263

INCURABLE ROMANTIC
Well-built, professional, outgoing male, 44, N/S, seeks female, 30-45, for long-term, loving relationship, who enjoys countryside, National Trust, arts and travel. ☎5282

AGE IS ONLY A NUMBER...
...Said the Buddha. Interesting male, aged 54, 5'9", good build, Windsor/Eastbourne based, likes water/snow skiing, travelling, dining out and weekends away, seeking a genuine lady, 45-55. ☎5206

CALL ME
Respectable black male, 26, Oxford based, seeking a female. If you enjoy films, classical music, jazz and fun, give me a call. If you don't, please call me anyway! ☎5201

BE MY LOVE
Young, professional male, 31, seeks companionship. Lives life to the full, loves the outdoors and world travel, seeks lady, 23-33, to share laughter and friendship. ☎5279

FARAWAY LOOK
Strikingly handsome, tall, dark, athletic, professional male graduate, into scuba diving, good literature, eating out, seeks lady. Inspire me to spin tales of Gaelic wonder. Scotland. ☎5202

STOP...READ THIS
Good-looking, genuine male, mid-40s, 5'8", based in Brighton, slim build, N/S, into food, travel, cinema, sports, leisure, seeks female, 36-46, any nationality, for companionship, possibly lots more. ☎5160

OXFORD BLUES
Bored postgraduate student, 28, seeks petite female, for very close relationship. ☎5161

SEEKING A GIRLFRIEND
Sensitive, Swedish, white male, 23, seeking a caring female, 20-30, for chats, dinner etc. Rutling. ☎5092

POSSIBLE FUTURE
Midlands/Warwickshire-based, German-born male, mid-50s, 6'2", blue eyes, seeks attractive, tall, slimmish, feminine lady, under 55, who enjoys life, but thinks sharing is better, who's also looking for caring, faithful partner and friend. ☎5275

LOTS OF FUN
Good-looking white male, 27, 5'6", slim build, brown/blue, likes hip hop, cinema, museums, football, seeks attractive female, 18-37, N/S, for friendship and romance. London. ☎5264

MARRIAGE MINDED
Tall, attractive male, 35, seeks female soul mate, for life's pleasures. London. ☎5300

OXFORD BLUES
Bored, postgraduate student, 28, seeks petite female, for very close relationship. ☎5181

SMILING EYES
Young male, 41, cultured, diverse, amusing, active, seeking a female, 28-33, for friendship, romance and a family. Ring me and I will make you smile. Bath based. ☎5261

RED OR WHITE
Tall, dark, handsome, professional (advertising over) male, 32, seeks attractive, independent female, 25-30ish, to share a bottle or two with. London. ☎5297

RADICAL MAN SEEKS WOMAN
Unconventional, intelligent, articulate man, 50, into pubs, music, politics, with GSOH, seeks similar, radical woman, for exciting times. Bristol/London. ☎5207

JUDY, PLEASE CALL AGAIN
Unable to contact you by E-mail. Male, 30, 6', brown/blue, average build, good-looking, enjoys most things in life, likes music, sport, very confident, outgoing, laid back, seeks female, aged 25-33, who's attractive, lively, for relationship. ☎5086

FRESH NEW YEAR!
Good-looking, professional male, 31, 5'10", seeks skinny/big-built bubbly female, any age or colour. Very large women welcome. If you leave a message, I promise to get back to you. ☎5153

RED ALERT
Red-headed female, with medium build, intelligence, sought by black guy, 29, 6', slim build, into blues rock, reading, cinema. London. ☎4962

BROAD HORIZONS
Clapham-based, educated, slim, fit, nice-looking, worldly guy, 42, with many indoor and outdoor cultural interests, seeking a similar female, 35-45, with similar back-ground, with broad interests/mind and horizons, for whatever transpires. ☎5135

BUBBLY BLACK/WHITE
Male, seeks black/white, medium/well-built, attractive female, 27-37, GSOH, who likes a good laugh. Cambridge/London. Single mum welcome. ☎5096

CARING AND ROMANTIC
Male, 30, tall, slim, enjoys keep-fit, good food, conversation, country walks, nights in or out, seeks lady, for friendship, fun, leading to possible romance. Yorkshire area. ☎4960

ARE YOU OUT THERE?
Romantic male, aged 37, 5'11", black/blue, into countryside walking, keep-fit, travel, seeks intelligent, attractive lady, 27-32, to share the good things in life with. Brighton area. ☎5182

WHEN LOVE FINDS YOU
Black professional, 47, many interests, seeks attractive white female, 25-39, similar interests, for friendship, leading to a relationship. ☎5150

EASTERN PROMISE
Easygoing bloke, 50, likes eating out, cinema, walks and more, seeking an outgoing, friendly, Thai/Asian female, for one-to-one relationship. Central London. ☎5062

TALL JEWISH MAN
Professional, slim-built, intelligent, funny man, seeking the woman missing from his life, 32-40. London. ☎5145

HERTFORDSHIRE
Attractive, intelligent and sensitive man, in late 30s, with GSOH, seeking a lady, for relationship. ☎5141

MUSIC MAN
Torquay bloke, 49, dark hair, slim build, GSOH, lives by the sea, enjoys sport, jazz/blues/classical music, outdoor activities, seeks smart, outgoing female, 25-40, for friendship, possibly leading to more. ☎5046

TALL SLIM DESIGNER
Design Consultant/part-time songwriter/producer, 45, 6', slim, fit, own light brown hair, GSOH, seeks tallish, slim, intelligent, gorgeous lady, 30-40ish. Central London. ☎5154

LONDON
Professional musician, 47, 5'6", boyish good looks, brown/blue, N/S, N/D, likes sunshine, country walks, music, arts, seeks sweetheart. ☎5094

men seeking women

OFFBEAT GRADUATE
Affectionate and companionable, seeks animal-loving female companion, 50+, to share art galleries, concerts and cinema etc., also exploring London or country, conversation and other simple pleasures. ☎5151

ATTRACTIVE SWEDISH MAN
Male, 23, brown/blue, likes concerts, nature, deep conversation, walks, seeking a female, 20-30, redhead preferred. London or Middlesex. ☎5377

DISSOLUTE MAN...
...45, 6'2", slim build, many vices, seeks female rake, who's blessed with similar attributes. London. ☎5378

LIKES A LAUGH
Young male, 41, cultured, diverse, amusing, active, seeks female, 28-33, for friendship, romance and a family. Ring me and I'll make you smile. Bath. ☎5383

SINGLE WHITE MALE
Warm, witty, fit, solvent, educated male, 37, seeking similar, black or Indian lady, to share thoughts, laughter and the good things in life. ☎5434

HONEST AND HANDSOME
Graduate, 38, 5'11", solvent, successful in the arts, loves outdoors, fine wine, 'Friends' and good conversation (sometimes silly, sometimes serious), seeking like-minded, slim girl, under 40. London. ☎5418

REAL WORLD? GET LOST!
Make a better world with me. Cultured, dashing male graduate, 30, 6', seeking romance. Worcs based. ☎5315

SLEEPLESS IN GUERNSEY
Civil servant, 25, 5'6", brown/blue, kind, caring and romantic, GSOH, enjoys pubs, music, keeping fit, eating out, travel, seeks lady, 18-30, similar interests, GSOH for friendship, possibly leading to more. ☎5396

WOODY ALLEN/ FRIEDA KAHLOW
Multicultural, sincere, academic male, 35, seeking a witty female, possibly with a tattoo, to share the arty aspects of life or salsa. Manchester. ☎5432

SEEKING SOMEONE SPECIAL
Genuine male, 30, attractive, likes eating out, films, music, travel, seeks kind, friendly white female, 18-30, for friendship, possible relationship. London/Middlesex area. ☎5417

EFFERVESCENT AND EXTROVERT
Single male, young 38, non-smoker, no ties, enjoys life, fit and active, keen on sport (football and cricket), cinema, eating out, having a drink and also travel. If this takes your fancy, please give me a call. ☎5430

ATTRACTIVE ARCHITECT
Interior designer, early 30s, 5'10", slim build, green eyes, likes music, creativity, loves children, seeking a fit, slim, fun, attractive, creative female, similar profession and age, with morals and values, to settle down with. London or surrounding area. ☎5313

EDINBURGH BASED
Single, well-built male, 32, 5'10", blond/blue, N/S, likes cinema, restaurants, shopping, pubs, clubs, swimming, seeking female, 24-32, GSOH, for friendship and more. ☎5209

SWEETNESS
Tender, loving, attractive, confident and kind male, 26, seeking a feminine, petite female, 18+, for friendship, romance and lasting love. ☎5395

TRY LIFE
Yorkshireman, 37, 6'1", fit, professional, seeks intelligent, articulate female, 25-38, to share interests, food, wine and outdoor pursuits. Gloucs. ☎5103

EXOTIC ADVENT
Kind, sensitive, kind, honest, reliable, attractive male, 32, 5'9", dark hair/eyes, seeks special, understanding, exotic lady, 20-40, any nationality, to spend some time with. London or Middlesex area. ☎5380

AFFECTIONATE ARTGRADUATE
Offbeat companionable and understanding, seeks company of similar, animal-loving female, 50+, to share visits to galleries, concerts and other simple pleasures. London area. ☎5385

SAILING ADVENTURE
Next three to five years, in 40' yacht? Me: 6', presentable, easygoing, experienced sailer, seeking slimmish, seasick resistant, happy, N/S female mate, 50ish. South West. ☎5210

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HOPELESS ROMANTIC WANTED
Asian guy, 35, 5'8", medium/masculine build, N/S, likes cinema, dining out, seeks white guy, under 35, for friendship, relationship. Leicestershire/East Midlands area. ☎5375

GAY MALE
Male, 55, 6', large build, enjoys all the arts, good food and wine, long walks, seeks man, for a 1-2-1 relationship. Leicestershire area preferred. ☎5374

LOVELY LANCASHIRE LAD
Tall, dark, handsome, open, caring, sociable, modern, honest gay man, 34, into music, art, theatre, restaurants, herbalism, wildlife, Sherlock, saunas, sunset, smiles, shopping, clothes, animals, reading, composing. You: under 40? ☎5324

LOOKING FOR LOVE
Good-looking, gay postgraduate male, 26, 6'2", brown/blue, medium build, enjoys theatre, walking, cinema, reading, seeking similar, special man, for 1-2-1 relationship. NW England. ☎5320

NOT TOO WILD
Slim, medium-built, sincere gay male, 45, enjoys cinema, theatre, quiet nights in, swimming, travel, more, seeks similar, stable mate, for friendship and lasting relationship. Lincs. ☎5203

INTELLIGENT PROFESSIONAL
Gay professional male, 24, 6', brown hair/eyes, straight-acting, successful, comfortable lifestyle, seeks similar man, for sincere relationship. London. ☎5197

NOT TOO WILD
Slim, medium-height gay male, 45, sincere, enjoys cinema, theatre, quiet nights in, swimming, travel, more, seeks similar, stable male, for friendship and lasting relationship. Lincs. ☎5200

GOOD-NATURED INDIAN
Caring, friendly and affectionate, straight-acting, intelligent, educated, ordinary-looking, cheerful, professional London male, 40, medium build, non-scene, seeks genuine, reliable, stable man, 30-45, for fun, friendship, possibly more. ☎5144



LOOKING FOR YOU
Bisexual/gay female, aged 25-35, sought by bisexual guy, 30, 5'11", professional, attractive, blond/blue, athletic build, for friendship and fun, possibly leading to more. Midlands based. ☎5419

CHIC CHICK
Desired by aspiring libertine, for funky fetish clubbing. Me: handsome, warm and honest man, 30s. You: stylish, confident, self-aware female, able to share emotionally, intellectual, hedonistic adventures. London. ☎5303

FEISTY, HIGH HEELED LADY...
...30-55, who walks the walk. Are you seeking a domestic companion, who doesn't just talk the talk? Then call this attractive male, 39. ☎5394

SUSSEX COAST
Tall, slim, bisexual male, 48, with decent looks, seeks similar man, for fun, friendship, outdoor pursuits and sport. ☎5317

MASTERFUL
Good-looking male, mid-40s, 6', dark/blue, understanding, seeks submissive female, to share mutual awareness and pleasure. Beds/Herts/Cambs/East Anglia. ☎5258

COULD WE BE FRIENDS?
Attractive couple, 35/40, seek similar couple, for fun, friendship and outings. Yorkshire area. ☎5267

POST-OP TRANSSEXUAL
Male-to-female, 44, into music, nights out, staying in, having fun, seeks female, for fun, friendship and possibly more. Manchester area. ☎5199

FETISH
Creative male, 29, seeks adventurous, intelligent female, to experiment with. ☎5088

HI THERE!
Professional graduate, 25, tall, slim, smooth TV, very genuine, honest, loyal, seeks older male, for special relationship that will blossom in 1999. NW England. ☎5131

To advertise in this section please call the Personal Team on 0171 293 2347.

Don't forget to mention The Independent when replying to adverts.





MODERN MANNERS: YOUR CUT-OUT-AND-KEEP GUIDE TO SURVIVING THE MINEFIELD



Dear Serena,
We are finding it difficult to cope with two children and two jobs and we're thinking of taking on an au pair girl. At least, my husband is. You hear so many stories about men running off with the au pair, and I don't want to have my family destroyed in the same way. How can I vet potential au pairs to make sure that I don't allow some man-stealing hussy into my home?
Rebecca, Pimlico

What are you saying? That you don't trust your husband, or that you don't trust yourself? Your marriage is probably at greater risk from the women your husband encounters at work and associates with social drinking and moments of power, than it is from someone he will generally associate with nappies and washing-up. That said, you can't vet au pairs unless they're already in the country, but if you want to be sure, I would advise hiring someone from a former Communist country. One of the first things that went under the Communist regimes were those bourgeois affectations, grace and pretty manners, and there is still some way to go before those who grew up in these circumstances re-adopt them. I would recommend the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary as good sources. Avoid girls from war zones, as they are often understandably desperate and will do a lot to ensure their future in a safer environment. Also avoid Latinas, as before you know it they'll be too busy earning extra pounds, setting up salsa classes in local bars, to look after the children.

Dear Serena,
Further to Bob's letter of last week, I would dearly love to have a stag night, but when I think about my male friends, I realise that I don't really like that many of them. Should I just forget about it?
Stanley, Seagrove

Like them? Who said anything about liking the people on your stag night? Stag nights are about drinking, ritual humiliation and shaving foam, aren't they? You don't need to like someone to burst a condom filled with water over his head.

Dear Serena,
I recently broke my shoulder falling off a horse. I work in one of those rather self-consciously classless industries, and am worried that my colleagues are beginning to suspect that I'm in fact rather posh and judge me by it (I dropped the first half of my double-barrelled name for the same reason some years ago). How do I pull the wool back over their eyes?
Isabel, Shepherd's Bush

If anyone asks, say "Naah, it wasn't riding a horse. I was doing my circus skills class". They might thereafter think you're a lesbian, but that shouldn't be a problem.

Dear Serena,
What do you do if you hate the art at a private view?
Clarissa, Cambridge

Oh, come on, Clarissa; you may not like it, but saying so on the artist's big night would be roughly equivalent to criticising your hostess's dress sense at her birthday party. If you can't bring yourself to say something nice, say what a wonderful time you've had at the party (which will in itself probably be a lie, if the lukewarm chardonnay I've had to drink over the years is anything to go by). If you find yourself challenged directly, grit your teeth and say what a shame it is that they're out of your price range.

Dear Serena,
Our insurance company says that we must have alarms on the house in order to qualify for cover. What should we do about them when we have overnight guests? Should we set them and risk a false alarm, or leave them unset and invalidate our cover?
Stephen, Cumbria

You can leave an alarm on in the house only if you have en-suite bathrooms. Leave some bacon sandwiches in a covered dish on the dressing-table, as there is nothing that gives you a greater hunger in the night than knowing that you cannot leave your room. Why not get a pit-bull terrier? Great protection against burglars, and guaranteed to keep the most insomniac guests safely tucked up in their rooms till morning.

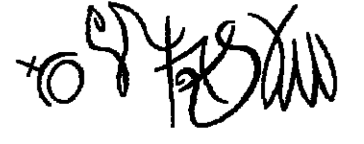
Dear Serena,
I am in the entertainment industry, and am about to give birth to my first child, and my fiancée and I still can't agree on names. The problem is that neither of us seems to have very much imagination when it comes to names, and we are afraid that our child won't stand out. Help!
V, Wilmslow

How about something exotic, like Kuala Lumpur Sugar, Ogodougou Feng Shui, or Billabong Toesock? Or something more homely, like Accrington Stanley? If you really want a child to stand out in the entertainment world, call it John.

Dear Serena,
What precautions are you taking against the Millennium Bug?
James, Whitehall

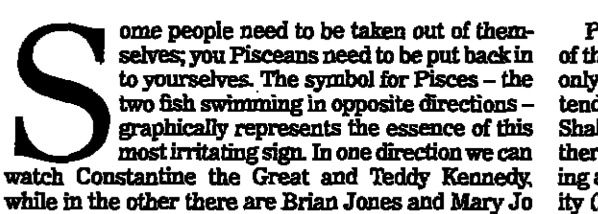
None; as you can see, I write with a pen.

Knotty problems with the world today? Write to Dear Serena, 'The Independent', 18th Floor, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, where they will be treated with the customary sympathy



POPPY FOLLY

YOUR STARS: IT COULD HAPPEN



Some people need to be taken out of themselves; you Pisceans need to be put back in to yourselves. The symbol for Pisces – the two fish swimming in opposite directions – graphically represents the essence of this most irritating sign. In one direction we can watch Constantine the Great and Teddy Kennedy, while in the other there are Brian Jones and Mary Jo Kopechne.

The Piscean philosopher Schopenhauer illustrated this truth by developing a theory to demonstrate that will is more important than knowledge – the precise opposite of what Pisceans believe. Except, of course, for fish that go swimming in the other direction, like Rupert Murdoch.

You are famously incompetent. John Holland invented the submarine, but he did it by accident (he was trying to invent a frigate, but it largely sank). Longfellow wrote the "Song of Hiawatha". And then there was, for a while, Blondin.

Pisceans are often quite good at sex; indeed, for many of them (Ralph Nader, Lou Reed, Dr Seuss), it is their only point. But, of course, there's a countervailing tendency. Anne Lee founded a movement called the Shakers that died out because she prohibited sex. Then there was Desi Arnaz Jnr, who made a fortune by buying a TV pilot and taking out all the upside-down activity (he also had to cut the title down from *I Love Lucy Because Boy Does She Squeal!*).

And, of course, there is Patrick Moore who exhibits the Piscean proclivity for getting so fat that sex proves itself to be impossible.

The Piscean mission is to transcend the physical world, to rise out of your body, and exist in the angelic world which is glimpsed (according to the disciplines of Chaldean numerology) only between the first and second gulp of the third gin sling. Your spiritual maturity leaves you unimpressed with the world and its rewards. It is significant that the one Marx brother born under this sign was Zeppo.



ARIES

IF YOU need some exercise, you now have the moral muscle to beat up everyone who's ever offended you. You are always in the right: it's not just overconfidence; your intuitive powers have the force of a revelation. This is such an odd experience your spouse may be reaching for the sedatives.

But denounce the doubters! In your ecstatic mood, you will go forth and be followed. You will outnumber your enemies, and with God on your side, you are unbeatable.

TAURUS

AS YOU lift your snout up from the sexual trough that you've been snuffling in, the stars will be reflected in your eyes. Enormous erotic truths will be glimpsed, and you will seem to understand how that thrashing around among the tumbled sheets has a profound but peculiar connection to the cosmos. Love at first sight will be embarrassing if you so happen to meet first in public. But there is healing in your hands (it is no wonder that your hit-rate is so high among the sick).



GEMINI

SOMEONE'S SHAKEN your kaleidoscope and you've rearranged yourself into a great-souled, philosophical, high-church frame of mind. Unusual eloquence enlivens your usual volubility. Teachers, politicians and lecturers will benefit, but the people who have to listen to them will net. Don't despise the effects of alcohol. Brains are all very well, but people prefer integrity, consistency, and reliability (all your shortest suits) only because they are so boring.

CANCER

THERE ARE admirers of yours out there; ones for whom you still harbour latent but dangerous feelings. There are practical and essentially irrelevant reasons why they haven't pressed their cause with you. Your view of whether you should open up a dialogue changes almost daily. There is danger beyond your garden fence; but then you have a talent for deception. You also have an ability to pretend it's not happening, and that may come to the same.



LEO

NOW YOU really will be impossible. You have the confidence to do things, and the energy with which to do them. Now you'll be charging off in front of your mystified acolytes, yodelling "Follow me!" – and goodness knows how the poor saps will react. How well have you frightened them? Alas for the laggards, your sense of loyalty is so exaggerated that you will return for anyone left behind. Bring major projects on to the front burner and turn up the gas.

VIRGO

BROAD-MINDEDNESS has never been much in vogue with Virgo (what's the point of it?) but now a weak relationship with Mercury may move you closer to the keyhole, at least, and thus enlarge your view of the other side. You benefit from a fluency of expression, and what you lack in emotional nimbleness you make up for in integrity. You will find this is the week for subtle, not to say invisible, self-promotion. Travel, if you feel secure enough at work.



LIBRA

YOU'RE UP for anything now, with Venus in trine with Pluto and sextile to Uranus. You will benefit from a reputation for kindness (you know you're too quick to be kind) and you can give off a marvellous aura of sky-coloured love which is fabulously effective at getting people well beyond your normal reach in to the pit. But these pleasures have pains of their own. You can't connect so intimately without suffering separation pangs. Only money will really cheer you.



SCORPIO

YOU CAN bounce people's heads around like basketballs. The court is yours, and everyone on it. You're a lover no longer; you're a leader, you need action, so those fat boys better get their big butts off the bench and start doing what they're told. You are suffused with inspiration and in touch with the deep structure of the universe (it's pretzel-shaped). As for sex, a trine between Pluto and Venus will encourage others to grovel across your body with hot kisses.



SAGITTARIUS

STOP GUSHING. Your emotional overflow is slopping about and making it difficult to keep your vessel properly trimmed. If you want to make use of these bizarre feelings (altruism on this scale is not just impractical; it's showing off), you need far more discipline yourself. Let your right hand not know what your left is doing. Do not love your neighbour as your neighbour's wife unless you can bear the consequences. Turn your base desires into religion, or art, at least.



CAPRICORN

THERE ARE parallel influences that shouldn't affect you, but you are suffering from a romantic uneasiness – Venus or Pluto may be responsible. No, it isn't indigestion, something is moving through the shadows in the crypt of your heart. You need a sacrifice to bring you to life. Perhaps the victim will be yourself. There will be a rebirth, but you'll have to believe it first. Love may hide itself in the mystery of sex (are your fingers too cold to unwrap it?).



AQUARIUS

YOUR VIVID emotional life has just acquired some new colours (what a spectrum you cover now). Your musical abilities will allow you to rhyme your way into the bed of innocent fools, and your mathematical abilities will enable you to reason your way out again. Your regular partners should give you a longer leash than usual, but a tighter collar. Sudden love affairs break out like brush fires, but if treated carefully, the root stock will not be damaged.

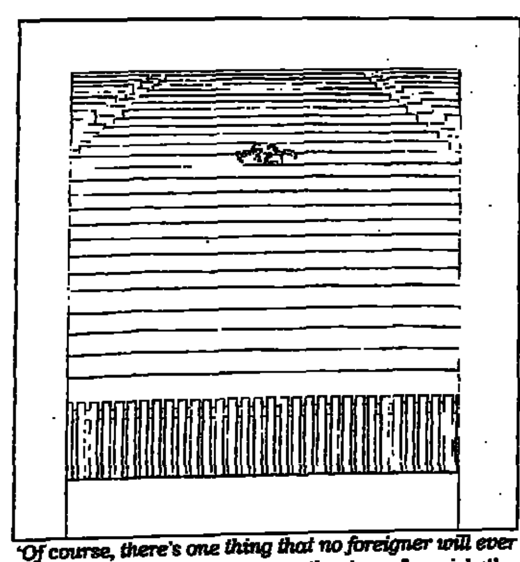


PISCES

THE WELTER of emotional effects you are creating will turn the stomach of your audience. Stop splashing about. If you do have a sense of universal mysteries and deep emotional structures (and you might because Jupiter and Neptune have a relationship), use it to do something useful – like placing your bet on tomorrow's value of sterling. Sublimate for success. And before you try a major project, make sure your veins have been given the attention they need.

CLASSIC CARTOONS

MARTIN PLIMMER ON KENNETH BIRD



'Of course, there's one thing that no foreigner will ever understand and that's our enthusiasm for cricket'

KENNETH BIRD'S deftly drawn Ministry of Information hieroglyph "careless talk costs lives" admonished passers-by from every wall in wartime Britain. That and his prolific output of war jokes has made his distinctly meagre drawing style one of the visual references by which we imagine that period.

This is quite an achievement for a cartoonist who didn't believe in the primacy of the image. "It is really better to have a good idea with a bad drawing," he said, "than a bad idea with a good drawing." As art editor of *Punch* from 1937 and editor from 1949 to 1953 (the only cartoonist to be given the job) Bird championed that creed.

A former Royal Engineer, who took the pseudonym Fougasse from the name of a First World War anti-personnel mine, Bird died in 1965.




PUZZLEMASTER

BY CHRIS MASLANKA

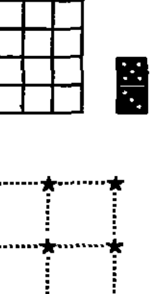
ASPECTS OF *Countdown* are, it now seems, also not what they seem. I refer to programme makers going out of their way to pretend that something is the case when it clearly ain't.

Most of *Countdown*'s 3.5 million viewers must have suspected long before Matthew Parris's outing of the show that the glib skills of many visitors to Dictionary Dell owed much to invisible helpers. The alternative hypothesis that all celebrity guests were stunning wordsmiths was a non-starter.

Why can't the whisperers behind the scenes be seen openly dishing out the verb sap? Because then the celebrities would look bad. So the celebrities find themselves instead in a false position. Oh that a screen would topple revealing a blinking huddle of nerds clustered around a wordfinder!

What is interesting is the idea that such a programme needs celebrities in the first place. If a celebrity has a skill beyond the facility to become famous, it's unlikely to overlap with anagrams and sums. Indeed the latter skill is so rare nowadays it has made Carol Vorderman the best-paid woman on TV. She also shows that one may shine at mental tasks and yet not become an anorak – a great first step in undermining the social forces that discourage numeracy. The bumbling Richard Whiteley also has an important role, extending a right to watch to all who see only four-letter words in FLLXEOORK or cannot see the nine-letter anagram in ROYALMINT. If he didn't exist we'd have to invent him.

But the function of falsely intelligent celebrities runs counter to all this. It diminishes the achievement of the true stars – the contestants – and perpetuates the myth that there is something out of reach about celebrities. Life is confusing enough without false signals being beamed at us.



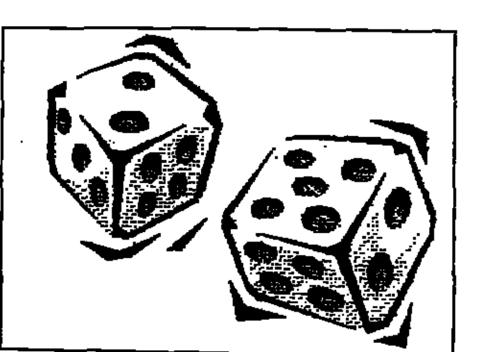
Points to ponder
1 What is the longest word findable in the letters FLLXEOORK?
2 Of what is ROYALMINT an anagram?
3 A classic one: can the modified chessboard be covered with 31 dominoes [See top diagram]? Answers next week.

Last week's puzzle
Ben Slocock was the first out of the electronic hat with a solution to Rosie Forth's star puzzle (see bottom diagram). He says that any path visiting each star exactly once must trace the same number of "arms" of the network as there are stars – ie 25. But any closed loop must trace an even number of arms. So it is impossible to find a tour that starts out at one star, visits each of them in turn and returns to its starting point.

E-mail: indy@puzzlemaster.co.uk

BACKGAMMON

CHRIS BRAY

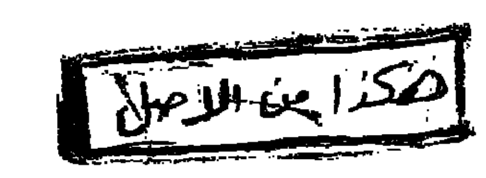


THE INTERNET continues to encroach on our daily existence, and the world of backgammon is no exception. Latest results from tournaments around the world can be obtained at a moment's notice, and the backgammon news group is a forum for the exchange of ideas and theory providing an excellent place for those new to the game to source information.

Playing backgammon on the Internet is also a growth area and one of the best sites is Netgammon. It has more than 15,000 members from around the world and has several advantages over some of its rivals: response time is very quick, board graphics are excellent and the organisers help players by arranging tournaments.

Most games on the Internet are played as short three-, five- or seven-point matches. Your results are logged and you receive an ELO rating. You begin at 1,500 and your rating is adjusted according to your performance; around and above 1,900 is exceptional.

Netgammon provides a monthly newsletter, to which I contribute a regular article, and is forging links with Biba (British Isles Backgammon Association). You can try out Netgammon free of charges for the first three months. Find it at: http://www.netgammon.com\us\index.htm



SUNDAY TELEVISION & RADIO

BBC1

6.40 Teletubbies (8700003). **7.20** Match of the Day (6226461). **8.30** Breakfast with Frost (52770). **9.30** The Heaven and Earth Show (76567). **10.30** Match of Their Day (18916). **11.00** Porridge (8119). **11.30** CountryFile (9848). **12.00** *On the Record (79515).* **1.00** EastEnders (8079515).

2.20 FILM Herbie Goes To Monte Carlo (Vincent McEveety 1977 US). Dean Jones stars in this sequel about a loveable Volkswagen (226935).

4.05 Tom and Jerry (4532770). **4.10** Are You Being Served? (6785206). **4.40** Masterchef 1999 (2717770). **5.10** News; Weather (8212003). **5.30** Local News (845751). **5.35** Songs of Praise (S) (T) (727867).

6.10 CHOICE All along the Watchtower. Sitcom set in an early warning station. See *Comedy of the Day*, below (121683).

6.40 Antiques Roadshow. Hugh Scully returns to Syon House to introduce more hitherto unseen clips from the series (S) (T) (574022).

7.25 Five Go Mad in the Kitchen (S) (594935).

7.30 Holiday: Fasten Your Seat Belt (R) (S) (T) (751).

8.00 Comic Relief's Great Big Excellent African Adventure! Julian Clary, Stephen Fry and Geri Halliwell collect more videotapes from out of Africa (S) (T) (557916).

8.50 News; Weather (T) (415409).

9.00 Love Town. Continuing the docu-soap about Gretna Green, marriage capital of the UK (S) (T) (1683).

9.30 The Lakes. Danny and Lucy finally confess their true feelings for each other (S) (831577).

10.10 Comic Relief Jukebox. More archive comedy clips (S) (137770).

10.30 Mrs Merton and Malcolm (S) (T) (19645).

11.00 Smith and Jones (R) (S) (3428).

11.30 Heart of the Matter. Joan Bakewell discusses circumcision (S) (T) (370596).

12.10 FILM Raggedy Man (Jack Fisk 1981 US). Divorcée Sissy Spacek falls for a sailor in Second World War Texas (Then Weather) (221130). To 1.45am.

BBC2

8.30 Little Mouse on the Prairie (9866954). **8.50** Alvin and the Chipmunks (9860770). **9.15** Wayne Manifesto (4390848). **9.40** Wild House (9983732). **10.05** No Sweat (9495003). **10.30** Grange Hill (2089799). **10.55** *Sub Zero* (7458645). **11.20** Grange Hill (6077515). **11.50** O Zone (5305157). **12.05** The Simpsons (1633698). **12.30** Robot Wars (58022). **1.00** Around Westminster (88664). **1.30** Sunday Grandstand (90068799). **1.35** Skiing (1128041). **2.20** Rugby League (3468886). **3.10** Rugby Union (8434003). **3.25** Rugby League (6599022). **4.10** Tennis (4550954). **5.10** Rugby League (5800916). **5.15** Rugby Union (9926157). **5.55** Animal Zone (862428).

6.00 Watch Out Britain. Britain's countryside this week (S) (218683).

6.20 Chimpanzee Diary (S) (575480).

6.35 The Natural World. Documentary looking at the wildest animals in Africa – the huge lions of the Tsavo National Park in Kenya (S) (600886).

7.30 The Money Programme. British manufacturing – useless, or a victim of the global economy? (S) (T) (393).

8.00 Loyalists. More Loyalist gunmen describe their violent past to Peter Taylor in his excellent ongoing series about the Troubles (S) (T) (588886).

8.50 Vintner's Tales with Jancis Robinson (R) (S) (T) (406751).

9.00 Red Dwarf VIII. Rimmer makes use of a "sexual magnetism virus" (S) (T) (9225).

9.30 Never Mind the Buzzcocks. With Frank Skinner, Leeroy Thornhill and Rick Wakeman (S) (T) (78886).

10.00 Tribe – UK. Trailer (S) (407041).

10.10 CHOICE Land and Freedom (Ken Loach 1995 UK) Loach's Spanish Civil War drama. See *Film of the Day*, below (S) (831428).

11.55 FILM La Cérémonie (Claude Chabrol 1995 Fr). Chabrol's version of Ruth Rendell's *A Judgement in Stone* stars Sandrine Bonnaire and Isabelle Huppert *(Then Weather)* (831428).

2.00 BBC Learning Zone: Personal Effectiveness (30449). **4.00** Languages (54343). **5.00** Business and Training (6150401). To 5.45am.

ITV LWT

6.00 GMTV (82409). **8.00** Diggit (2599225). **9.25** The Worst Witch (3213867). **10.00** Sunday Morning (91138). **11.00** My Favourite Hymns (6515). **11.30** Crosstalk (4916). **12.00** That's Esther (64683). **1.00** ITN News; Weather (94761683). **1.10** Jonathan Dimbleby (1746664).

2.00 FILM The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp (Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger 1943 UK). Boer War veteran Roger Livesey looks back over his life in this intelligent satire (15511645).

4.50 Big Screen (3039664). **5.25** London Weekend Tonight (8220022).

5.45 Dream Ticket (270886).

6.15 ITN News; Weather (T) (587225).

6.30 Michael Barrymore's My Kind of Music. Michael Barrymore hosts the entertainment show in which competitors get the chance to perform – as well as show off their musical knowledge (S) (T) (29003).

7.30 Coronation Street. Rita returns home to find Sharon and Nita at war (S) (T) (119).

8.00 Heartbeat. Mike and Jackie's future looks uncertain when Jackie's uncle becomes a suspect in a hit-and-run accident (S) (T) (1799).

9.00 London's Burning. Last in the current series of the firefighting soap, and a massive fire on board a container ship puts George in danger (S) (T) (1935).

10.00 Tarrant on TV. Features a game show where contestants get coated in wax (28393).

10.30 ITN News; Weather (T) (450521).

10.45 The South Bank Show. A look at what has happened in dance and theatre in South Africa during the first five years of ANC rule (S) (759003).

11.45 The Jesus File with Tony Robinson (533867). **12.15** *Still in* Bed with MeDinner (9293333). **12.50** Snooker: Liverpool Victoria Charity Challenge (9288468). **2.20** SeaQuest 2032 (7329772). **3.15** Jonathan Dimbleby (8948826). To 4am.

Channel 4

7.05 Animal Alphabet (9475225). **7.15** Salty's Lighthouse (88515). **7.45** T4: Bug Alert! (87886). **8.15** Saved by the Bell (2689480). **8.40** City Guys (9606157). **9.10** Catdog (3221886). **9.45** Planet Pop (1414393). **10.00** The Waltons (82480). **11.00** Hollyoaks (2167003). **12.10** Dishes (1240225). **12.40** Dishes (3113680). **1.10** The Cosby Show (9484664). **1.45** Football Italia (91222664).

4.00 FILM Geordie (Frank Launder 1955 UK). Weedy Bill Travers determines to build up his physique and enter the Olympic Games in this Highland tale co-starring Alastair Sim (7409).

6.00 Time Team. Tony Robinson and the team return to a previous dig in 1998 which unearthed a Roman villa in the Cotswolds, and discover that the villa dates from earlier than previously thought – to the first days of the Roman occupation (T) (68409).

7.00 Escape to River Cottage. Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall enters his produce at a local show (T) (8374).

7.30 Fusion. Follows a 17-year-old boy of mixed race as he searches for his father (T) (461).

8.00 Tiger Shark: Legendary Thug of the Sea. Film-maker Ben Cropp tags and tracks a tiger shark to determine its movements along the Great Barrier Reef (T) (2041).

9.00 CHOICE Shanghai Vice. Film-maker Phil Agland's revealing documentary series about Shanghai's murky underworld. See *Documentary of the Day*, below (S) (T) (9577).

10.00 FILM Kama Sutra: a Tale of Love (Mira Nair 1996 Ind/UK/Jap/Ger). India in the 16th century and two virgins learn the lessons of love (and sex) in this sumptuously photographed but otherwise disappointing effort from the director of *Salaam Bombay!* (T) (77309770).

12.05 Boyz Unlimited (9295791). **12.40** Babylon 5 (4907333). **1.35** Dark Skies (3747820). **2.25** Dweebs (5119028).

2.55 FILM Labyrinth (Jaromil Jires 1991 Ger). A film director, Maximilian Schell, shooting a piece about Kafka in Prague, gets involved in the story of the Holocaust (3914449). To 4.25am

Channel 5

6.00 Wildlife SOS (27900225). **6.25** Plonsters (52786312). **6.30** Havakazoo (8125770). **7.00** Dappledown Farm (6443515). **7.30** Milkshake! (7096729). **7.35** Wimzie's House (3698041). **8.00** The Mission (4471515). **8.30** Do You Believe In? (4470886). **9.00** Stickin' Around (4461138). **9.30** Milkbar (9482732). **10.00** Mirror, Mirror (8116022). **10.30** The Valley Between (4450022). **11.00** USA High (2491190). **11.30** Singled Out (2409119). **12.00** The Mag (60690312). **1.10** 5 News (80139022). **1.20** Frostrup on Sunday (89901935). **1.50** Movie Chart Show (11875409). **2.20** Exclusive (5120428). **3.05** Family Affairs (63870157). **5.20** Serious Money (21450409).

5.50 FILM Hercules and the Amazon Women (John Lawson 1994 US). The original feature-length film that spawned both *Hercules* and *Xena – the Warrior Princess*. So if you fancy getting up to speed with these mythological hotch-potches, start here. With Kevin Sorbo and Lucy Lawless (T) (98084119).

7.30 5 News and Sport (6818157).

8.00 Wild Encounters. Documentary looking at how a group of young snow geese followed their human "parents" across North America (S) (T) (1730886).

9.00 FILM Deceived by Trust (Chuck Bowman 1995 US). Tense drama about a social worker's attempts to expose a school principal who is molesting one of his pupils. When she tries to investigate, she encounters a wall of silence and suspects that educational authorities are conspiring to protect the principal's reputation. Stepfanie Kramer stars (S) (T) (44969664).

10.40 Wing and a Prayer. Legal-eagle drama. Anna and Simon defend a man charged with trading in military secrets, while Carl and Catherine try to secure political asylum for a young Nigerian woman (S) (T) (6474732).

11.40 The Comedy Network (7026428). **12.15** *Sports Talk with* Steve Scott (1078325). **12.45** Ice Hockey – NHL (S) (65463739). **4.40** Tibs and Fibs (R) (S) (92448913). **5.05** Move On Up (R) (S) (32260265). To 5.30am.

ITV/Regions

Anglia
As LWT except: 11.30 Anglia News Sunday Supplement (4916). **2.00** Eye of the Eagle (6916). **2.30** Bugs Bunny in King Arthur's Court (954). **3.00** Film: Cheaper by the Dozen (80480). **4.30** Snooker Liverpool Victoria Charity Challenge (9623138). **5.35** Wildlife Rescue (997312). **6.05** Anglia News (567461). **12.50** Snooker (8518517). **2.15** Highlander (8277082). **3.10** Jonathan Dimbleby (8949555). **3.55** Cybernet (51003361). **4.25** Soundtrax (46732604). **4.40** ITV Nightscreen (59746739). **5.00** Coronation Street (53772).*

Central
As LWT except: 11.30 Lifeline (1234664). **11.35** Central Newsweek (4012138). **11.55** Central News and Weather (1253799). **2.00** It's Your Shout (5381954). **2.40** Snooker Liverpool Victoria Charity Challenge (8797770). **3.40** Murder, She Wrote (7748374). **4.35** Hollywood's Greatest Stunts (4973312). **5.30** Heart of the Country (770). **6.00** Central News and Weather (582770). **4.00** Jobfinder (54389). **5.00** It's Your Shout (53772).

HTV Wales
As LWT except: 11.00 My Favourite Hymns (6060225). **11.25** Welsh Agenda (6063312). **11.55** HTV News (1253799). **2.00** The Front Row (40733480). **4.45** Anatomy of Disaster (9758577). **5.40** Soccer Sunday (996683). **6.10** HTV News (187374). **12.50 - 5.00** As Anglia.

HTV West
As HTV Wales except: 11.25 The Sunday Roast (6063312). **2.00** Murder, She Wrote (3442848). **2.50** Film: The Caine Mutiny (15718916). **5.10** Getaways (9710935). **5.40** West Match Plus (996683).

Meridian
As LWT except: 11.30 7 Days (4013867). **11.50** Meridian News and Weather (9905111). **2.00** Getaways (6916). **2.30** Murder, She Wrote (44312). **3.30** Film: The Glory Brigade* (627935). **5.05** Big Day Out (9711664). **5.35** Monkey Business (997312). **6.05** Meridian News and Weather (567461). **12.50** Snooker (8518517). **2.15** Highlander (8277082). **3.10** Jonathan Dimbleby (8949555). **3.55** Cybernet (51003361). **4.25** Soundtrax (46732604). **4.40** ITV Nightscreen (59746739). **5.00** Freescreen (53772).

Westcountry
As LWT except: 11.30 Weekend Match (4916). **2.00** Power Game (6916). **2.30** Murder, She Wrote (6785935). **3.25** Film: The Sea Chase (28917003). **5.30** The Great Escape (770). **6.00** Goals Extra (181190). **6.05** Westcountry News (567461). **12.50 - 5.00** As Anglia.

Yorkshire
As LWT except: 11.30 Around the House (4916). **2.00** Calendar News (52059461). **2.05** Hague - Ten Years On (61572683). **2.35** Film: Upstairs and Downstairs (31649022). **4.30** Coronation Street (55867). **5.30** Calendar News (882041). **5.45** Goals (270886). **12.50** Cybernet (3209468). **1.20** Film: Dil Tera Aashiq (37865265). **4.15** Jobfinder (1223517).

Tyne Tees
As Yorkshire except: 11.30 Newsweek (4916). **2.00** North East News (52059461). **5.30** North East News and Sport (882041). **5.45** Cafe Sport (270886).

S4C
As Channel 4 except: 12.00 Gogs* (61658683). **12.10** Rownd a Rownd: Omnibws (38262190). **12.40** Ffeil (76630022). **12.55** Gol (56174916). **1.40** Talkabout Welsh (27236645). **2.00** Ffermio (23903206). **2.35** Brookside (93540312). **4.00** Escape to River Cottage (81572428). **4.30** Pam Ff Duw? (81561312). **5.00** Newyddion (76377732). **5.05** Maniffesto (49039157). **5.35** Pobol y Cwm (97811022). **7.30** Botwm 4 (81562041). **8.00** Dechrau Canu Dechrau Canmol (64071515). **8.30** Joni Jones (23689008). **9.05** Film: Y Plentyn Cyntaf (98624409). **10.30** Newyddion (99261409). **10.45** Film: Kama Sutra: a Tale of Love (10756886). **12.50** The Phil (99266246). **1.50** Close.

COMEDY OF THE DAY



ALL ALONG THE WATCHTOWER (6.10pm BBC1) A Sunday teatime slot between *Songs of Praise* and *Antiques Roadshow* suggests that this new sitcom is going to be more *Allo! Allo!* than *Men Behaving Badly*. Set in a remote and almost deserted RAF early warning station in the Scottish Highlands, the running gag is that the crew don't know the Cold War is over.

DOCUMENTARY OF THE DAY



SHANGHAI VICE (9pm C4) Anyone who saw Phil Agland's documentary series about rural China, *Beyond the Clouds*, will require no further recommendation to watch his new one. It goes on the beat with the vice squad of Shanghai, where heroin has taken over from the traditional drug of choice in the city – opium. Smuggling heroin here can result in the death penalty.

FILM OF THE DAY



LAND AND FREEDOM (10.10pm BBC2) Powell and Pressburger's *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (2pm ITV) is one for the video library. Otherwise Ken Loach's Spanish Civil War epic contains another good performance from Ian Hart, here playing an unemployed Liverpudlian who signs up with the republican side before discovering that politics isn't just a case of left and right.

RADIO

Radio 1
(97.6-99.8MHz FM)
6.30 Kevin Greening. **10.00** Mark Goodier's Radio 1 Request Show. **1.00** Emma B. **3.00** Top of the Pops. **4.00** The Official UK Top 40. **7.00** Radio 1's Dance Anthems with Dave Pearce. **10.00** Trevor Nelson. **12.00** Clive Warren. **4.00 - 6.30** *Scott Mills.*

Radio 2
(88-90.2MHz FM)
7.00 Don Maclean. **9.05** Steve Wright. **11.00** Parkinson's Sunday Supplement. **1.00** Desmond Carrington. **3.00** By Popular Demand. Artie Shaw: King of the Clarinet. **4.00** As Time Goes By. **4.30** Sing Something Simple. **5.00** *Pam Ayres.* **7.00** Hugh Scully. **8.30** Sunday Half Hour. **9.00** Alan Keith. **10.00** Malcolm Laycock. **11.00** The David Jacobs Collection. **12.00** Lynn Parsons. **3.00 - 4.00** Alex Lester.

Radio 3
(90.2-92.4MHz FM)
6.00 On Air.
9.00 Brian Kay's Sunday Morning.
11.00 Artist of the Week Encore.
12.15 Music Matters.
1.00 The Radio 3 Lunchtime Concert.
2.35 Grieg.
3.00 Spirit of the Age.
4.00 100 Great Singers.
4.15 Centurions.
4.30 The Year.
5.45 Sunday Feature: Peter Stein.
6.30 Private Passions.
7.30 Choir Works. In the early 1900s, Elgar embarked on trilogy of oratorios on the subject of the founding of the Christian church but only completed two of them. Brian Kay introduces a performance of the second of those great oratorios, 'The Kingdom'. Pamela Coburn (soprano), Christine Cairns (mezzo), *Laurence Dale (tenor),* David Wilson-Johnson (baritone), BBC Singers, BBC Symphony Chorus and Orchestra/Andrew Davis.
9.15 Sunday Play: Troy. Three plays by Andrew Rissik. 2: 'The Death of Achilles'. With Paul Scofield as Hermes and Geraldine Somerville as Helen. The story *resumes in the ninth year* of the Trojan War. Achilles has removed himself from the action after a quarrel with Agamemnon. Also starring Toby Stephens, James Hayes, Oliver Cotton and Ian Hogg. Director Jeremy Mortimer. (R)
10.45 World Music. Mike Gonzalez presents six programmes exploring the varied ethnic musical traditions of Latin America, from the beginnings of salsa and samba to the music of Colombia and the Andes and the 'nueva cancion' - the new song of Chile. 2: 'The Spirit of Samba'. The story of samba, a musical form that strongly reflects the history and experiences of the Brazilian people.
11.15 Sunday Play: Troy. (R)
12.45 Chopin.
1.00 - 6.00 Through the Night.

Radio 4
(92.4-94.6MHz FM)
6.00 News Briefing.
6.05 Something Understood.
6.35 On Your Farm.
6.57 Weather.
7.00 News.
7.05 Sunday Papers.
7.10 Sunday.
7.55 Radio 4 Appeal.
8.00 News.
8.05 Sunday Papers.
8.07 Sunday Worship.
8.45 Letter from America.
9.00 News; Broadcasting House.
10.00 The Archers.
11.15 Desert Island Discs.
12.00 News; Bridging *the Gap.*
12.30 Just a Minute.
12.58 Weather.
1.00 The World This Weekend.
1.30 Counterpoint.
2.00 News; Gardeners' Question Time.
2.30 A Stitch in Time.
3.00 News; The Classic Serial: Joseph Andrews.
4.00 News; Writers' Masterclass.
4.30 *Fine Lines.*
5.00 News; File on 4.
5.40 Letters from Afar.
5.54 Shipping Forecast.
5.57 Weather.
6.00 Six O'Clock News.
6.15 Pick of the Week.
7.00 News; The Archers.
7.15 Do the Right Thing. Human behaviour is dissected with wit and wisdom by Jane Thynne and guests.
8.00 News; Fat Chance. A bittersweet comedy in five parts by Jenny McDade. 3: 'Weighty Matters'. A television star turns up at Wendy Bottomley's slimming club and Graham divulges his secret to Lee - not a wise move. With Gareth Corke, Janine Duvitski, Michael Troughton and Anne Reid.
8.30 Law in Action. Guilty or not guilty? The people of Leeds tackle case studies from the magistrates' courts.
9.00 News; On Giant's Shoulders. 'Faraday - the Gentleman Chemist'. Famous for his Friday evening lectures, Faraday was a popular figure in literary and scientific society. *Melvyn Bragg* talks to Professor Sir John Meurig Thomas in the Great Hall of the Royal Institution in London where Faraday gave many of his inspiring lectures. (R)
9.30 Analysis. 'Choice in Proportion'. Electoral reform will make more votes count, encouraging *ideas and increasing* choice, say supporters. But which ideas? And do the political parties really want it that way? Peter Kellner asks how electoral reform will affect voter choice and party behaviour.
10.00 News; The Westminster Hour. Andrew Rawnsley presents the political headlines *of the next week,* live from Westminster.
11.00 News; The Learning Curve. Libby Purves with the guide to the world of learning, with practical advice, features and your views.
11.30 Something Understood.
12.00 News.
12.15 Diaries of Today.
12.30 The Late Story: *Heritage Road.*
12.48 Shipping Forecast.
1.00 As World Service.
5.30 World News.
5.35 Shipping Forecast.
5.40 Inshore Forecast.
5.45 Prayer for the Day.
5.47 - 6.00 Farming Today.

Radio 4 LW
(198kHz)
12.00 - 12.04 *News* Headlines; Shipping Forecast. **8.00 - 10.00** Open University.

Radio 5 Live
(693, 909kHz MW)
6.00 Brief Lives.
6.30 Breakfast with Andrew Neil.
9.00 SportsWeek.
10.00 Hayes on Sunday.
12.00 This Football *Business.*
12.30 The Media Show.
1.00 Sunday Sport. Football: commentary at 1.00 on the Division One game between Crystal Palace and Barnsley, followed by Newcastle v Arsenal in the Premiership at 4.00.
6.00 The Scottish Premier League.
8.00 *News Extra.*
8.30 Brief Lives. 5 Live's obituary column.
9.00 Dallyn Worldwide.
9.30 Out This Week.
10.00 Late Night Currie.
1.00 Up All Night.
5.00 - 6.00 Morning Reports.

Classic FM
(100.0-101.9MHz FM)
6.00 Sarah Lucas. **9.00** Classic Romance. **12.00** David Mellor. **2.00** Alan Mann. **4.00** Margaret Howard. **6.00** Countdown Top Ten. **7.00** Smooth Classics at Seven. **9.00** Sunday Night at the Opera. **11.00** Michael Mappin. **1.00** Concert. **3.00 - 6.00** Mark Griffiths.

Virgin Radio
(1215, 1197-1260kHz MW 105.8MHz FM)
6.00 Richard Allen. **10.00** Danny Baker. **1.00** Nick Abbot. **4.00** Janey Lee Grace. **6.45** London Calling with Janey Lee Grace/AM Pete and Geoff. **7.30** Pete and Geoff. **10.00** James Merritt. **1.00** Steve Power. **4.30 - 6.30** Richard Allen.

World Service Radio
(198kHz LW)
1.00 The World Today. **1.30** Meridian. **2.00** The World Today. **2.30** Pick of the World. **3.00** The World Today. **3.20** Sports Roundup. **3.30** Global Business. **4.00 - 7.00** The World Today.

Talk Radio
6.00 *Paul Ross.* **10.00** Derek Draper and Peter Hitchens. **12.00** Russell Grant. **3.00** Nicky Horne's Access All Year. **6.00** Let's Talk Comedy with Don McLeary and Sanjeev Corti. **8.00** Cheating Hearts with Jayne Irving. **10.00** James Whale. **1.00 - 6.00** Mike Dickin.

SATELLITE & CABLE

Sky Premier
6.00 Femmes Fatales (43848). **7.00** All Dogs Go to Heaven II (1996) (37409). **8.30** Legend of the Ruby Silver (1996) (72119). **10.30** Tom and Huck (1995) (60596). **12.30** Hollywood Buzz (92480). **1.00** All Dogs Go to Heaven II (1996) (91664). **3.00** Legend of the Ruby Silver (1996) (61954). **5.00** Tom and Huck (1995) (88799). **7.00** *House Arrest* (1998) (34867). **9.00** Film Night (97044). **9.30** The Nephew (1996) (69935). **11.30** The Spitfire Grill (1996) (180206). **1.25** The Cherokee Kid (1996) (296536). **3.00** A Modern Affair (1994) (191807). **4.35 - 6.00** Femmes Fatales (6863994).

Sky MovieMax
6.15 Two Much (1996) (985886). **8.15** Loss of Faith (1997) (27041190). **10.00** *Deep Family* Secrets (1997) (10886). **12.00** Amore! (1993) (92393). **2.00** Loss of Faith (1997) (44867). **4.00** Two Moch (1996) (1867). **6.00** Alien Nation: Udara Legacy (1997) (24003). **8.00** Anaconda (1997) (54954). **9.30** The Relic (1996) (127954). **11.20** Monkey Shines (1988) (103022). **1.15** A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors (1987) (928623). **2.55** Talk to Me (1996) (396130). **4.30 - 6.00** Deep Family Secrets (1997) (65371).

Sky Cinema
11.00 Buck Privates* (1941) (2076770). **12.30** A Touch of Larceny* (1959) (9669480). **2.00** Notorious* (1946) (3182664). **3.45** Champion* (1949) (5185119). **5.30** Howards End (1991) (3866986). **8.00** Dead Calm (1989) (9301954). **9.45** Wall Street (1987) (68432041). **11.50** The Rainbow (1989) (7808886). **1.45** The French Connection II (1975) (1199807). **3.40** The Glass Menagerie* (1950) (6109975). **5.25** Close.

FilmFour
6.00 His Girl Friday* (1940) (14753374). **7.35** Seven Shiny Coins (9599119). **8.00** Singles (1992) (66930138). **9.40** Crawl (2929157). **10.00** Slaves to the Underground (1997) (2648041). **11.40** Blink (1994) (9645916). **1.25** Black Rainbow (1989) (8252802). **3.05 - 6.00** Joy Luck Club (1993) (81617265).

Discovery Channel
4.00 Wings (6105312). **5.00** Flightline (4174683). **5.30** Coltrane's Planes and Automobiles (3008461). **6.00** Crocodile Hunter (8410008). **7.00** The Supernatural (4161119). **7.30** Creatures Fantastic (3025138). **8.00** Chariots of the Gods - The Mysteries Continue (6717577). **9.00** Titanic (6720041). **10.00** Titanic (6192848). **12.00** Discover Magazine (9765739). **1.00** Justice Files (1258230). **2.00** Close.

Sky One
6.00 Hour of Power (50138). **7.00** What a Mess (21393). **7.30** Street Sharks (40428). **8.00** Orson and Olivia (71409). **8.30** Teenage Alien Fighters (63480). **9.00** The Simpsons (54732). **9.30** Garfield and Friends (79634). **10.00** Dream Team (39312). **11.00** Wrestling (26848). **12.00** Kung Fu - the Legend Continues (95577). **1.00** New Adventures of Superman (29175). **2.00** Beverly Hills, 90210 (88190). **3.00** VIP (47585). **4.00** Star Trek: Deep Space Nine (12770). **5.00** Star Trek: Voyager (6935). **6.00** The Simpsons (9119). **6.30** The Simpsons (3799). **7.00** King of the Hill (7664). **7.30** 3rd Rock from the Sun (2683). **8.00** Earth: Final Conflict (30664). **9.00** The X Files (50428). **10.00** Miami Uncovered (5355). **11.00** South Park (20799). **11.30** Forever Knight (69596). **12.30** Tales from the Crypt (16535). **1.00** Sightings (67468). **2.00 - 7.00** Long Play (5455159).

Sky Sports 1
6.00 Powerboats (13119). **6.30** Rugby League (55480). **8.00** Aerobics (71848). **8.30** Gillette World Sport Special (70119). **9.00** Fight Night (28732). **11.00** Goals on Sunday (73770). **12.00** Rugby Union (99041). **1.30** Gillette World Sport Special (97374). **2.00** Superbouts (6932157). **2.55** The Heart of Football (1483645). **3.00** Super Sunday Newcastle v Arsenal (3217409). **6.25** Heart of Football (185041). **6.30** Rugby League (85747). **8.00** *Moto-plus* (8312). **8.30** Spanish Football (29190). **10.30** Football Special (95686). **12.00** Football League Review (46420). **1.00** Scottish Football (29807). **2.00** Spanish Football (70307). **4.00** Close.

Sky Sports 2
6.00 Unlimited (2454954). **7.00** Aerobics (2996567). **7.30** Extreme Sailing (3441652). **8.00** Soccer Ex*tra* (1158393). **11.00** Sports Unlimited (1441472). **12.00** Football League Crystal Palace v Barnsley (7750393). **3.00** Basketball All-star Game (7496374). **5.00** Motor Sport (6740954). **6.00** World Sport (9703428). **6.30** Snow Show (9787480). **7.00** Golf (6557916). **11.00** Powerboating (6691175). **12.00** Snow Show (2751130). **12.30** Rugby (3989284). **2.00** Close.

Sky Sports 3
11.30 Futures (17987190). **12.00** Golf (86294080). **4.00** Max Power (17900041). **5.00** Triathlon (87666480). **6.00** Scottish Football Kilmarnock v Rangers (82967729). **8.30** Moto-cross (83879138). **9.30** Rugby League (83276525). **11.00** Triathlon (90320480). **12.00** Close.

Eurosport
7.30 Snowboarding (59190). **8.00** Biathlon (87428). **9.30** Nordic Skiing (29427138). **12.45** Alpine Skiing (6144428). **2.00** Biathlon (37616). **3.30** Tennis (60190). **5.00** Biathlon (80596). **7.00** Tennis (88157). **8.30** Football (60886). **10.00** Sportscentre (683408). **10.15** Athletics (3330003). **11.30** Boxing (37652). **12.30** Close.

UK Gold
7.00 The Pink Panther (4906537). **7.10** Middlemarch (9078041). **8.10** Blake's Seven (9359935). **9.10** Dr Who Omnibus (85104409). **11.00** Dallas Omnibus (9166119). **12.50** **Film:** Champions (1983) (60065003). **3.00** The Bill Omnibus (86397428). **5.20** Keeping Up Appearances (1461886). **6.00** Ballykissangel (60984732). **7.05** The Good Life (3673799). **7.45** To the Manor Born (7880041). **8.25** Only Fools and Horses (6375848). **9.05** Black Adder the Third (8084138). **9.45** Black Adder the Third (2250732). **10.25** Auf Wiedersehen, Pet (29259732). **11.30** Whatever Happened to the *Likely Lads?* (3847664). **12.10** Ruby Wax Meets... Heidi Fleiss (6998791). **12.50** Pride and Prejudice (7688826). **1.50** Minder (3293497). **3.00 - 7.00** Shopping (8558420).

Living
6.00 Tiny and Crew (37312799). **6.20** Johnson and Friends (83212770). **6.30** Philbert the Frog (12300157). **6.40** Tiny Tales (84740312). **6.45** Greedysaurus and the Gang (84749683). **6.50** Polka Dot Shorts (84737848). **7.00** Practical Parenting (5496848). **7.05** Professor Bubble (8020732). **7.30** Barney and Friends (3366916). **7.55** Practical Parenting (4710664). **8.00** Caillou (1855770). **8.05** Bug Alert (4368854). **8.25** Babaloos (1235461). **8.30** Caillou (8519577). **8.35** Tiny and Crew (5879683). **8.50** Practical Parenting (7100374). **9.05** Mrs Greenthumbs (5839119). **9.40** Michael Cole (3538206). **10.30** Brookside Omnibus (1708954). **12.30** LA Law Omnibus (4581461). **3.00** **Film:** Cafe Metropole* (1937) (72121041). **4.45** Entertainment Now! (70698954). **5.00** Special Babies (7134428). **5.30** Living Issues (3821225). **6.00** **Film:** She Led Two Lives (1995) (1595119). **8.00** Ally McBeal (1596848). **9.00** Jerry Springer Double Bill (1599935). **11.00** Michael Cole (7452916). **12.00** Close.

TNT
9.00 The Dirty Dozen (1967) (7497619). **11.45** The Last Challenge (1967) (64118799). **1.45** Savage Messiah (1972) (23896284). **3.30** Village of Daughters* (1961) (82843739). **5.00** Close.

Paramount Comedy Channel
7.00 Jenny (7206). **7.30** Grace under Fire (9995). **8.00** Ellen (8954). **8.30** Newsradio (5461). **9.00** Cheers (65886). **9.30** Cheers (16409). **10.00** Taxi (93157). **11.00** Seinfeld (37003). **11.30** The Larry Sanders Show (45409). **12.00** Duckman (86807). **12.30** We Know Where You Live (49888). **1.00** Comedy Store (29246). **1.30** Club Class (66265). **2.00** Dr Katz (52623). **2.30** Tibs and Fibs (31130). **3.00** Nightstand (32710). **3.30** Abbott & Costello (55710). **4.00** Close.

Granada Plus
6.00 Jason King (6403428). **7.00** Bootsie and Snudge (8410577). **7.30** That's My Boy (8422312). **8.00** Watching (6322585). **8.30** Dharma and Greg (7772026). **9.00** Dempsey and Makepeace (5185225). **10.00** Behind the Velvet Ropes (8922312). **10.30** Homes with Style (7877670). **11.00** The Return of Sherlock Holmes (8408732). **12.00** The Professionals (3225490). **1.00** Love and Marriage (8419848). **1.30** Please, Sir! (9825534). **2.00** Poirot (6923041). **3.00** Bonanza (4144157). **4.00** The High Chaparral (4123664). **5.00** Classic Coronation Street Omnibus (7886515). **7.30** Dharma and Greg (4829393). **8.00** Poirot (8155503). **9.00** The Professionals (4755747). **10.00** The Odd Couple (2722521). **10.30** Hogan's Heroes (2922729). **11.00** As Granada Men & Motors (7048393). **2.00** Close.

FULL 7-DAY TV AND RADIO LISTINGS APPEAR IN 'THE INFORMATION'

SATURDAY RADIO

PICK OF THE DAY

A KEY QUESTION for our times is **Do You Believe in Cher?** (7pm R2). The fact that the singer and actress (*right*) has miraculously avoided the demonisation that usually attends lengthy celebrity is a source of universal wonder. Tonight, she speaks.

There's another chance to hear Andrew Rissik's acclaimed trilogy, **Troy** (8.55pm R3), which tells the story of Helen, using the voices of, among others, Paul Scofield and Geraldine Somerville.

Between the Ears (11pm R3), a tribute to the Chicago blues pianist Jimmy Yancey, is a spellbinding jumble of sounds and voices – if only more radio programmes were this inventively constructed.

DOMINIC CAVENDISH

RADIO 1
(97.6-99.8MHz FM)
7.00 Mark Goodier. **10.00** Chris Moyles. **1.00** Emma B. **3.00** Radio 1's R 'n' B Chart. **5.00** Judge Jules. **7.00** Danny Rampling - Lovegroove Dance Party. **9.00** Westwood - Radio 1 Rap Show. **12.00** Radio 1 Reggae Dancehall Nite. **2.00** The Essential Mix: Cox and Masters. **4.00 - 6.30** Annie Nightingale.

RADIO 2
(88-90.2MHz FM)
6.00 Mo Dutta. **8.05** Brian Matthew. **10.00** Steve Wright's Saturday Show. **1.00** The Smith Lectures. **1.30** Heated Rollers. **2.00** Alan Freeman. **3.30** Johnnie Walker. **5.30** Paul Gambaccini. **7.00** Do You Believe in Cher? See *Pick of the Day*. **8.00** Brian Kennedy in Concert. **9.00** Suzi Quatro: Rockin' with Suzi Q. **10.00** Bob Harris. **1.00** Lynn Parsons. **4.00 - 7.00** Mo Dutta.

RADIO 3
(90.2-92.4MHz FM)
6.00 On Air.
9.00 CD Review.
12.00 Private Passions.
1.00 The Radio 3 Lunchtime Concert.
2.00 Best of 3.
3.00 Young Artists' Forum.
4.00 The Secrets of Orchestration.
5.00 Jazz Record Requests.
6.00 Jazz Century.
6.30 Krommer.
6.55 Opera on 3. Strauss's gripping, one-act setting of the ancient Greek tragedy by Sophocles, to a libretto by Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Elektra, abused and rejected by her mother Clytemnestra, is in a state of shock after the murder of her father Agamemnon. She finds her brother Orestes, whom she had given up for dead, and together they plot revenge on their mother and her lover Aegisthus. With Gabriele Schnaut, soprano (Elektra), Deborah Voigt, soprano (Chrysothemis), Hanna Schwarz, mezzo (Aegisthus), Monte Pederson, baritone (Orestes), Chorus and Orchestra of the New York Metropolitan Opera/James Levine.
8.55 Troy. Three new plays by Andrew Rissik re-telling the story of events leading up to and following the fall of Troy, broadcast over this weekend on Radio 3. 1: 'King Priam and His Sons'. With Paul Scofield as Hermes. At the birth of her second son, Hekabe, Priam's wife, dies. And her child is cast out onto the hillside in order to satisfy the demands of the gods. Also starring Toby Stephens, James Hayes, Oliver Cotton and Ian Hogg. Director Jeremy Mortimer. (R) See *Pick of the Day*.
10.25 Haydn and Bartok. Caroline Palmer (piano). Bartok: Three Rondos on Slovak Folk Tunes. Haydn: Sonatas in E flat, H XVI 38; in B flat, H XVI 41. (R)
11.00 Between the Ears. The third of six newly commissioned experiments in creative radio. 'At the Window'. Glimpses of the Chicago pianist Jimmy Yancey through one of his greatest blues, the voices of his family and friends, the magic of baseball, and the sounds and music of his city. See *Pick of the Day*.
11.30 Jazz on 3.
1.00 - 6.00 Through the Night.

RADIO 4
(92.4-94.6MHz FM)
6.00 News Briefing.
6.05 Sports Desk.
6.10 Open Country.
6.57 Weather.
7.00 Today.
9.00 Home Truths.
10.00 News; Loose Ends.
11.00 News; Food Programme.
11.30 From Our Own Correspondent.
12.00 News; Money Box.
12.30 The Sunday Format.
12.55 Weather.
1.00 News.
1.15 Any Questions?.
2.00 News; Any Answers? 0870 010 0444.
2.30 Descendants.
3.00 News; The Saturday Play: The John Buchan Weekend.
4.00 News; Weekend Woman's Hour.
5.00 Saturday PM.
5.30 Talking Pictures.
5.54 Shipping Forecast.
5.57 Weather.
6.00 Six O'Clock News.
6.15 Live from London.
7.00 News; Saturday Review.
7.45 Heavenly Thoughts. 'And God Created Science'. Astrophysicist Jocelyn Bell Burnell talks about her spiritual beliefs and explains why she has no problem reconciling her faith in God and her scientific study of the heavens. (R)
8.00 News; The Archive Hour: A United States of Europe?. In 1957, the six founder members of the European Economic Community signed the Treaty of Rome, laying the foundations for a united Europe. But Britain stayed away. Historian Christopher Andrew examines Britain's mercurial relationship with the union and wonders if it will ever take its place at the heart of a 'united states of Europe'.
9.00 News; The Classic Serial: Joseph Andrews. Henry Fielding's comic masterpiece, dramatised in four parts by Dominic Power, is a riotous journey through the morals and manners of high and low society. 3: Joseph finds himself tempted by an old flame, while Fanny and Parson Adams fall foul of the law. With Norman Rodway, Matthew Dunster, and Gabrielle Drake.
10.00 News and Weather.
10.15 The Moral Maze. Michael Buerk and regulars Janet Daley, David Starkey, Ian Hargreaves and David Cook investigate the moral questions behind the week's news.
11.00 News; Airs of England. Richard Coles explores the diverse sounds of Victorian English music. 'Hardy on the Fiddle'. This week he talks to Dave Townsend, who has re-created West Gallery music and tunes that Thomas Hardy refers to in his novels.
11.30 Fine Lines.
12.00 News.
12.25 Experimental Feature: The Way Home. (R)
12.30 The Late Story: Glacial.
12.48 Shipping Forecast.
1.00 As World Service.
5.30 World News.
5.35 Shipping Forecast.
5.40 Inshore Forecast.
5.50 - 6.00 Bells on Sunday.

RADIO 4 LW
(198kHz)
12.00 - 12.04 News Headlines; Shipping Forecast.

RADIO 5 LIVE
(693, 909kHz MW)
6.00 Dirty Tackle.
6.30 Breakfast.
9.00 Chiles on Saturday.
11.00 Move It.
11.30 You're Not Singing Any More.
12.00 Sportscall.
1.00 Sport on 5. Football: coverage of all the day's action, with commentary on a top game in the Premiership. Fixtures include Chelsea v Liverpool and Man United v Southampton.
6.06 Six-O-Six.
8.00 Dallyn UK.
9.00 The Treatment.
10.00 Late Night Currie.
1.00 Up All Night.
5.00 - 6.00 Morning Reports.

CLASSIC FM
(100.0-101.9MHz FM)
6.00 Sarah Lucas. **8.00** Countdown. **11.00** Masters of Their Art. **12.00** Mike Read. **3.00** Margaret Howard. **6.00** Classic FM at the Movies. **7.00** Smooth Classics at Seven. **9.00** Opera Guide. **10.00** The Classic Quiz. **12.00** Midnight Music. **2.00** Evening Concert. **4.00 - 6.00** Sunday Start.

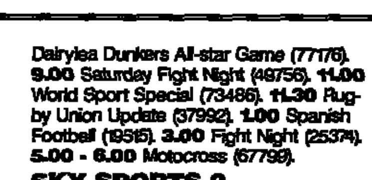
VIRGIN RADIO
(1215, 1197-1260kHz MW 105.8MHz FM)
6.00 Richard Allen. **9.00** Harriet Scott. **12.00** Classic Countdown with Russ Williams. **2.00** Rock and Roll Football. **5.30** Wheels of Steel. **10.00** Janey Lee Grace. **2.00 - 6.00** Steve Power.

WORLD SERVICE RADIO
(198kHz LW)
1.00 Newsdesk. **1.30** Best on Record. **2.00** The World Today. **2.30** Agenda. **3.00** The World Today. **3.15** Sports Roundup. **3.30** World Business Review. **3.45** Letter from America. **4.00** The World Today. **4.30** Omnibus. **5.00** The World Today. **5.30 - 6.00** Women Who Dared to Speak.

TALK RADIO
6.00 OK to Talk. **8.00** Danny Baker's Morning Edition. **12.00** It's Round and White - with Tom Watt. **2.00** The SportZone. **5.05** 505 with Gary Newborn and Tom Watt. **7.30** Nancy Roberts. **10.00** Dave Barrett's Phone-In. **2.00 - 6.00** Mike Dickin.

SATELLITE AND CABLE

PICK OF THE DAY



SINCE HER starring role in *Good Will Hunting*, Minnie Driver has become one of our most sought-after actresses in Hollywood. She shows why in **Grosse Pointe Blank** (10pm Sky Premier), an engagingly off-beat, black comedy from George Armitage. She plays a woman being wooed by her former childhood sweetheart, a professional assassin (John Cusack, *right*) back in town for the first time in 10 years for a school reunion. All the while, he is being trailed by a rival killer, Mr Grocer (Dan Aykroyd).

The conflicts in the former Yugoslavia began after the death of General Tito. **Biography** (9pm History Channel) tonight examines the life of the man born Josip Broz, who led the National Liberation Army against the Germans in 1941, and became Prime Minister of Yugoslavia in 1946.

JAMES RAMPTON

SKY PREMIER
6.00 Apocalypse Watch (1995) (159621). **8.30** Northern Lights (1997) (79244). **10.00** Turbo: a Power Rangers Movie (1997) (37589089). **11.45** Rainbow (1996) (96183973). **1.30** Apocalypse Watch (1995) (261805). **4.00** Northern Lights (1997) (88331). **5.30** Turbo: a Power Rangers Movie (1997) (44756). **7.30** preview (6422). **8.00** Liar Liar (1997) (82447). **10.00** Grosse Pointe Blank (1997) (761244). See *Pick of the Day*. **11.50** Postcards from the Edge (1990) (439553). **1.35** Exit in Red (1996) (676374). **3.20 - 6.00** The Universal Story (1995) (74[illegible]867).

SKY MOVIEMAX
7.00 Movie Magic (40008). **7.30** Action Heroes (5226466). **8.15** UK Top Ten (4405224). **9.00** Vegas Vacation (1997) (38337). **11.00** My Ghost Dog (1997) (72331). **1.00** Movie Magic (49379). **1.30** Action Heroes (9935824). **2.15** UK Top Ten (2073534). **3.00** Ebirah - Horror of the Deep (1966) (11379). **5.00** My Ghost Dog (1997) (38114). **7.00** Vegas Vacation (1997) (20244). **9.00** Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore (1975) (83176). **11.00** Lost Highway (1997) (12231398). **1.15** Welcome to the Dollhouse (1996) (937954). **2.45** The First Deadly Sin (1980) (657652). **4.40 - 6.15** Ebirah - Horror of the Deep (1966) (92513683).

SKY CINEMA
11.00 The Big Steal (1949) (2016398). **12.30** The Devil and Miss Jones (1941) (1723263). **2.30** The City That Never Sleeps (1953) (4803089). **4.00** Nothing but the Truth (1941) (7168485). **6.00** The Desperate Hours (1955) (1520805). **8.00** Sea Wolves (1980) (1525350). **10.00** North Dallas Forty (1979) (9584263). **12.00** The Hell with Heroes (1968) (90[illegible]128). **1.45** Destination Moon (1950) (4566480). **3.20** The Devil and Miss Jones (1941) (50943683). **4.50** Close.

FILMFOUR
6.00 Forbidden Planet (1956) (98514640). **7.40** Flying over Mother (1465718). **8.00** Bullets over Broadway (1994) (69983466). **9.40** Mailman Matthew (2952485). **10.00** Get Shorty (1995) (4591718). **12.00** Belle de Jour (1967) (3742916). **1.40** Le Mepris (1963) (8947765). **3.25 - 6.00** Bitter Moon (1992) (53798683).

DISCOVERY CHANNEL
4.00 Flightpath (6138640). **5.00** A Century of Warfare (4193718). **6.00** A Century of Warfare (4115896). **7.00** Super Structures (6764485). **8.00** Natural Disasters (4103195). **8.30** Natural Disasters (4182602). **9.00** Shoot to Thrill (6760669). **10.00** Forensic Detectives (6763756). **11.00** A Century of Warfare (9238992). **12.00** A Century of Warfare (6769954). **1.00** Weapons (7102461). **2.00** Close.

SKY ONE
7.00 What a Mess (48640). **7.30** Street Sharks (34447). **8.00** The Adventures of Sinbad (35398). **9.00** The Simpsons (19089). **9.30** Garfield and Friends (46621). **10.00** Chris Evans (23331). **11.00** Wrestling (43195). **12.00** Wrestling (36244). **1.00** Superman (45992). **2.00** America's Dumbest Criminals (7089). **2.30** America's Dumbest Criminals (8379). **3.00** Guilty! (58992). **4.00** Star Trek: Deep Space Nine (77027). **5.00** Star Trek: Voyager (2896). **6.00** Xena: Warrior Princess (65756). **7.00** VIP (79973). **8.00** JAG (89821). **9.00 Film:** Sky One Special Feature: The Abyss (1989) (375447). **11.30** Beat the Crusher (58183). **12.30** Showbiz Weekly (49022). **1.00** The Big Easy (88596). **2.00** Fire (58190). **3.00 - 6.00** Long Play (5299867).

SKY SPORTS 1
6.00 Hold the Back Page (31447). **7.00** Sky Sports Centre (69379). **8.00** Aerobics (81805). **8.30** Racing News (80176). **9.00** Hold the Back Page (87114). **10.00** World Tenpin Bowling Masters (65331). **11.00** Max Power (85195). **12.00** Soccer Saturday (5762621). **5.30** Football Scrapbook (47737). **7.00** Basketball - Dairylea Dunkers All-star Game (77176). **9.00** Saturday Fight Night (49756). **11.00** World Sport Special (73486). **11.30** Rugby Union Update (37992). **1.00** Spanish Football (19515). **3.00** Fight Night (25374). **5.00 - 6.00** Motocross (67799).

SKY SPORTS 2
6.00 Watersports World (2487282). **7.00** Aerobics (8691355). **7.30** Racing News (9146440). **8.00** Soccer (2993008). **12.00** Motocross (3407911). **1.00** Sailing (9041896). **1.30** Powerboats (3494447). **2.00** Rugby Union: Tetley's Bitter Cup (6921398). **4.30** Motor Sport (6902263). **7.00** Golf (6580244). **11.00** Inside the Senior PGA Tour (4441331). **11.30** Basketball - Dairylea Dunkers All-star Game (7418716). **1.30** Rugby League (4374041). **3.00** World Motor Sport (2423008). **5.30 - 6.00** Extreme Sailing (7494138).

SKY SPORTS 3
12.00 Golf (28494468). **4.00** Extreme Sailing (87443718). **4.30** Watersports World (75151669). **5.30** World Polo 1998 (68813485). **6.30** Rugby Union Update Richmond vs Leicester (82462756). **8.00** Spanish Football (92668466). **10.00** Rugby League (68168640). **11.30** Powerboats (57392822). **12.00** Close.

EUROSPORT
7.30 YOZ Mag - Youth Only Zone (96621). **8.30** Biathlon (19824). **9.30** Nordic Skiing (424447). **12.00** Alpine Skiing (79060). **12.30** Alpine Skiing (20973). **1.30** Nordic Skiing (36843). **2.00** Biathlon (1043060). **2.45** Nordic Skiing (1032447). **4.00** Biathlon (1550060). **4.45** Alpine Skiing (570027). **5.45** Tennis (2048060). **7.00** Tennis (62244). **9.00** Boxing (11973). **10.00** Stock Cars (14060). **11.00** Bowling (91756). **12.00** Darts (93916). **1.00** Close.

UK GOLD
7.00 Angels (9221602). **7.30** Neighbours Omnibus (74769621). **9.25** Dallas Omnibus (81362060). **12.10** EastEnders Omnibus (17937350). **3.00** The Bill Omnibus (86311008). **5.25 Film:** King Kong (1976) (11333466). **8.00** What a Carry On! (6305089). **8.35** Harry Enfield and Chums (5692843). **9.15** The Thin Blue Line (8006350). **9.55** Red Dwarf V (2289244). **10.35** Monty Python's Flying Circus (2582640). **11.15** Live at Jongleurs (7821195). **11.50 Film:** Scarface (1983) (78530027). **3.00 - 7.00** Shopping with Screenshop (6903848).

LIVING
6.00 Tiny and Crew (37345027). **6.20** Johnson and Friends (83252398). **6.30** Philbert the Frog (12333485). **6.40** Tiny Tales (84773640). **6.45** Greedysaurus and the Gang (84772911). **6.50** Polka Dot Shorts (84760176). **7.00** Practical Parenting (5429176). **7.05** 10 plus 2 (5250379). **7.20** Bedtime Stories (5432640). **7.25** Babaloos (5431911). **7.30** Caillou (1401640). **7.35** Bug Alert (7207973). **7.55** Practical Parenting (4743992). **8.00** Polka Dot Shorts (1879350). **8.10** Tiny and Crew '98 (1270534). **8.15** Happy Birthday (1874805). **8.25** Babaloos (1275089). **8.30** Caillou (8546805). **8.35** Tiny and Crew (5802911). **8.50** Practical Parenting (7133602). **9.05** Mrs Greenthumbs (8555553). **9.35** Can't Cook, Won't Cook (5181244). **10.05** Ready, Steady, Cook (3435669). **10.40** Maury Povich (8672621). **11.30** The Roseanne Show - Highlights (9589718). **12.00** Entertainment Now! (5577089). **12.30** LA Law Omnibus (4521089). **3.00 Film:** A Tree Grows in Brooklyn (1945) (5514224). **5.30** Animal Rescue (3854553). **6.00 Film:** Daisy Kenyon (1947) (1528447). **8.00** Ally McBeal (1529176). **9.00** Jerry Springer Double Bill (1522263). **11.00** Michael Cole (7485244). **12.00** Close.

TNT
9.00 TNT Interview with Michael Caine (17937195). **9.30** Get Carter (1971) (92318843). **11.45** Hit Man (1972) (75941060). **1.30** The Fearless Vampire Killers (1967) (21669935). **3.15** The Spy in the Green Hat (1966) (42319596). **5.00** Close.

PARAMOUNT COMEDY CHANNEL
7.00 Jenny (1447). **7.30** Grace under Fire (7114). **8.00** Ellen (9945). **8.30** Newsradio (9602). **9.00** Drop the Dead Donkey (99263). **9.30** Whose Line Is It Anyway? (20282). **10.00** Frasier (83263). **10.30** Cheers (92911). **11.00** Seinfeld (73468). **11.30** The Larry Sanders Show (46718). **12.00** Duckman (49995). **12.30** We Know Where You Live (96954). **1.00** Comedy Store (69022). **1.30** Club Class (87111). **2.00** Dr Katz (76461). **2.30** Tibs and Fibs (95596). **3.00** Nightstand (89886). **3.30** Abbott & Costello (86848). **4.00** Close.

GRANADA PLUS
6.00 Jason King (6436756). **7.00** Bootsie and Snudge (8443805). **7.30** That's My Boy (8455640). **8.00** Watching (2027373). **8.30** No Strings (3477814). **9.00** Mission: Impossible (5118553). **10.00** Persuaders (8451824). **11.00** Man in a Suitcase (8431060). **12.00** Fiddlers Three (9877850). **12.30** Emmerdale (6724027). **3.00** Bonanza (4177485). **4.00** The High Chaparral (4156992). **5.00** Hawaii Five-O (5337737). **6.00** Persuaders (3520242). **7.00** Mission: Impossible (7435293). **8.00** The Return of Sherlock Holmes (4850391). **9.00** An Audience with Peter Ustinov (3479185). **10.00** An Audience with Billy Connolly (1505224). **11.00** Granada Men & Motors (7071621). **2.00** Close.

REGIONAL TELEVISION VARIATIONS

BBC1 N IRELAND
As BBC1 England except: 4.45 Final Score (7152911). **5.00** Northern Ireland Results (8256447). **5.20** Final Score (6523737). **6.00** Newsline (537911).

BBC1 SCOTLAND
As BBC1 England except: 3.55 Rugby League (3495379). **4.40** Afternoon Sportscene (2728027). **5.25** Fresh Prince of Bel Air (6531756). **6.00** Reporting Scotland (537911). **10.35** Sportscene - Match of the Day (8128282).

BBC1 WALES
As BBC1 England except: 4.45 Final Score (1932973). **4.55** Wales on Saturday (9785621). **6.00** Wales Today (537911).

ANGLIA
As LWT except: 12.30 Stepping the World (26843). **1.05** Anglia News and Weather (54203094). **2.20** Champions of the Future (62673824). **2.50** Going Wild (3880640). **2.55** Airwolf (3814331). **3.50** Snooker Liverpool Victoria Charity Challenge (7700114). **5.05** Anglia News and Sport (8259534). **8.40** News; [illegible] and Weather (919331). **2.15** Box [Office] America (1664003). **2.40** World [Footb]all (5599802). **3.10** CD UK (6517751). **4.05** Sean Connery - Close-Up (5414393). **4.50** Soundtrax (85755206). **5.05** ITV Nightscreen (7311409).

CENTRAL
As LWT except: 12.30 Premiere (26843). **1.05** Central News and Weather (54203094). **2.20** Snooker Liverpool Victoria Charity Challenge (7731553). **3.50** TimeCop (7700114). **5.05** Central News, Weather and Goals Extra (8259534). **8.40** News; National Lottery Update; Weather (919331). **3.55** Jobfinder (7812698). **5.00** Spotlight Asia (11374).

HTV WALES
As LWT except: 12.30 Movies, Games and Videos (26843). **1.05** HTV News (54203094). **2.20** Pirate TV (62673824). **2.50** Warner Brothers Cartoon (7851640). **3.00** seaQuest DSV (6649379). **3.50** Snooker Liverpool Victoria Charity Challenge (7700114). **5.05** HTV Wales News and Sport (8259534). **2.15** Box Office America (1664003). **2.40** World Football (5599802). **3.10** CD UK (6517751). **4.05** Sean Connery - Close-Up (5414393). **4.50** Soundtrax (85755206). **5.05** ITV Nightscreen (7311409).

HTV WEST
As HTV Wales except: 12.30 Sportsweek (26843). **1.00** News; Weather (53853553). **2.20** Movies, Games and Videos (62673824). **2.50** Pirate TV (5729466). **3.20** Dinosaurs (4132263). **5.05** HTV West News and Sport (8259534). **8.40** News Headlines; National Weather (919331).

MERIDIAN
As LWT except: 12.30 Pier Pressure (26843). **1.05** Meridian News and Weather (54203094). **2.20** Champions of the Future (62659244). **2.45** Cartoon (7861027). **2.55 Film:** Columbo: Butterfly in Shades of Grey. Peter Falk thinks radio talk show host William Shatner is shooting him a fast line. Silly title, eh? With Molly Hagan, Jack Laufer, Yorgo Constantine. (85171896). **5.05** Meridian News and Weather (8259534). **8.40** News; Weather (919331). **2.15** Box Office America (1664003). **2.40** World Football (5599802). **3.10** CD UK (6517751). **4.05** Sean Connery - Close-Up (5414393). **4.50** Soundtrax (85755206). **5.05** ITV Nightscreen (7311409).

WESTCOUNTRY
As LWT except: 12.30 Movies, Games and Videos (26843). **1.05** Westcountry News (54203094). **2.20 Film:** Girls at Sea. Sailor Ronald Shiner is at panic stations when three young ladies are stranded aboard his battleship after an all-night party. Nudge-nudge Navy larks with Guy Rolfe, Michael Hordern, Anne Kimbell, Fabia Drake. (7731553). **3.50** seaQuest DSV (7700114). **5.05** Westcountry News (1442843). **8.40** ITN News; Weekend Weather (919331). **2.15** Box Office America (1664003). **2.40** World Football (5599802). **3.10** CD UK (6517751). **4.05** Sean Connery - Close-Up (5414393). **4.50** Soundtrax (85755206). **5.05** ITV Nightscreen (7311409).

YORKSHIRE
As LWT except: 12.30 Dinosaurs (26843). **1.05** Calendar News and Weather (54203094). **5.05** Calendar News and Weather (5845089). **5.10** Goals Extra (2975911). **8.40** News; Weather (919331).

TYNE TEES
As Yorkshire except: 1.05 North East News and Weather (54203094). **5.05** North East News and Weather (5845089). **5.10** Full Time (2975911).

S4C
As Channel 4 except: 1.55 Happy Days (52382350). **2.00** Happy Days (51534602). **5.05** Newyddion (76309331). **5.10** Y Clwb Rygbi (52344244). **7.45** Newyddion (98723282). **8.00** Carnifal Y Coff (31963517). **9.00 Film:** Patagonia. Drama portraying life in Patagonia's Welsh community. (40113973). **10.30 Film:** Soylent Green. New York City, early in the 21st century. It's a mess – an overcrowded ghetto with people scrambling over each other to get at the food trucks. The privileged few watch from their ivory towers. Disgruntled cop Charlton Heston listens to tales of the good old days from room-mate Edward G. Robinson. A vivid sci-fi morality play with a shock ending that leaves a nasty taste in the mouth. (58182379). **12.15** John Peel's Sounds of the Suburbs (32496374). **12.50** Just Say No. This irreverent look at the world of cinema focuses on the world of drug culture. (26897886). **1.20** Pop-Up Video (20786732). **1.45** Alice in Acidland (50445119). **2.15 Film:** Alice in Acidland. 1960s period piece which delivers a cautionary tale about a naive college girl who falls in with a hippy crowd, experimenting with mind-expanding drugs and free love. As she drops acid for the first time, the film switches from black and white to colour and some stunning visuals. (91766732). **3.10** The Trip (29101770). **3.40** The Clangers (81846867). **3.50** Hill Street Blues (10085312. **4.40** Close.

INDEPENDENT PURSUITS

CHESS
JON SPEELMAN

TODAY AND on Monday, two reviews of books by former World Correspondence champions, both published by Gambit but in all other respects as different as you could imagine.

Readers may have noticed that I seldom criticise books. The explanation is simple: I usually don't bother with ones I don't like. But *The System* by Hans Berliner (Gambit £14.99) has made such an impression that I must make an exception.

I first delved into this on a train on the way to Gatwick Airport and it so incensed me (I admit I was also tired) that I went three stops too far and nearly missed my plane. Later, I showed it round to my Bundesliga team and it attracted comments and ridicule of great ferocity.

The reason for this is its extraordinarily arrogant, indeed almost Messianically bombastic tone. Berliner, in his time, was an unprecedentedly successful champion with a career record of 94 wins, 10 draws and just one loss. He also created a fine computer program, Hitech. But his stated belief in the foreword that chess will be solved by 2030, and his attempts to refute major openings such as the Grunfeld and Queen's Gambit Declined, are utterly at variance with the modern, flexible understanding of chess. One reason for this is that much of the book was written 20 or 30 years ago, and his purely analytical approach – though understandable in a correspondence and computer man – makes almost no concessions to positional understanding.

I'll start with his assertion that "White's correct first move is 1 d4 because it controls three central squares while no other move controls more than two". Leaving aside arithmetical considerations – how does he define a central square to get exactly three? – this is extraordinary special pleading. The move, after all, also weakens e4 and as a result he spends much of the rest of the book trying to make f3 work in sundry positions.

Next there's the claim that after 1 d4 Nf6, 2 c4 is better than 2 Nf3. Of course, if White's position is sufficiently good then it may be. But, *a priori*, you don't, for example, know whether the weakening of e4 and the early exposure of the b4-e1 diagonal exploited by the Nimzo-Indian – 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 – is a serious matter. (And Berliner, admittedly in old notes – game 12 – confessed that he didn't know how to meet this.)

Some of Berliner's specific analysis, especially against the Grunfeld, is extremely interesting. But he simply doesn't consider a sufficiently broad range of lines to convince the modern eye of his very strong assertions – for example, after 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Bc4 c5 8 Ne2 0-0 9 Be3 Nc6 10 Rc1 cxd4 11 cxd4 Qa5+ 12 Kf1 Ilya Gurevich's Qa3!, which he doesn't mention, is now the main line.

Although I find parts of this book disturbingly compelling, I'm happily far from convinced that the chess Messiah has come.

BRIDGE
ALAN HIRON

IT WAS the last rubber of the evening – which may explain the wild bidding on this deal. I report the auction as it happened but invite you to find the extremely odd safety play, missed by declarer, that would have allowed them all to go home a lot earlier.

West opened Four Spades and North chose to bid Four No-trumps for take-out. East bid Five Diamonds, although I cannot think why, and South tried Five Hearts. At least five minutes ticked by while the next three players considered their problems and eventually passed.

West led the two of spades against Five Hearts and, on inspecting dummy, declarer asked "You could not see your way to give me Six?" Perhaps savouring his own wit, he failed to notice the significance of the lead. Snorting happily to himself, he discarded a diamond from dummy. East ruffed with the jack of hearts and, as he had not failed to attach some meaning to the lead, played back a club for his partner to ruff. Now another spade promoted the setting trick for East's king of trumps. At this point dummy replied to his partner's earlier question with "No, it seemed cheaper to pass!"

Game all; dealer West

West	North	East
	♠none ♡A Q 7 6 4 ♢A J 4 ♣A J 10 7 5	
♠K J 9 8 7 6 3 2 ♡9 ♢6 5 3 2 ♣none		♠none ♡K J ♢K Q 10 9 8 7 ♣9 8 6 4 3
	South ♠A Q 10 5 4 ♡10 8 5 3 2 ♢none ♣K Q 2	

And the rubber went on, and on, and on...

Leaving aside the bidding and the by-play, what was the unusual safety play that South had missed? The lead, if he had noticed it, strongly suggested a void in clubs and it was not at all unlikely that East was void in spades. The solution, therefore, is to ruff the opening lead with dummy's ace! Then declarer simply leads a low trump from the table and, no matter how the adverse trumps are divided, now has a guaranteed 11 tricks, losing (at most) two heart tricks.

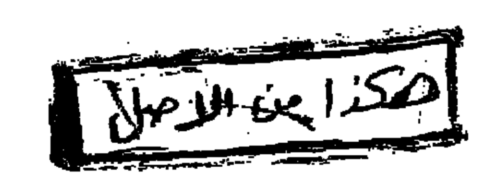
CONCISE CROSSWORD

No.3857 Saturday 27 February

ACROSS
1 Cereal crop (3)
3 Pigs (5)
7 Faithfulness (8)
8 Time gone by (4)
9 Permanently binding (12)
10 Spies (6)
12 Fervent (6)
14 Civilian in time of war (3-9)
18 Source of water (4)
19 Trusty (8)
20 Throw out (5)
21 Before (3)

DOWN
1 Fence (7)
2 Correct (5)
3 Authority (3-2)
4 Confine (7)
5 Artist's support (5)
6 xxxx (6)
11 Headlamp housing (7)
12 Used for growing crops (6)
13 Girl's name (7)
15 Overweight (5)
16 Deserve (5)
17 Conscious (5)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:
ACROSS: 1 Reign, 4 Doff (Rained off), 8 Marital, 9 Viola, 10 Gibe, 11 Children, 12 Mother-of-pearl, 15 Immature, 17 Grin, 20 Extra, 21 Obvious, 22 Whey, 23 Dodge. DOWN: 1 Rarebit, 2 Iris, 3 Neighbourhood, 4 Develop, 5 Flour, 6 Snug, 7 Carnal, 12 Maiden, 13 Estuary, 14 Apology, 16 Match, 18 Moss, 19 Ovid.





JASPER REES

TELEVISION REVIEW

YOU WOULDN'T mind having Dr Phil Hammond as your GP. He presents Trust Me, I'm a Doctor (BBC2), and you probably would trust him. Like Harry Hill, he's one of those doctors who opts to specialise not in the heart or the brain or the liver, but in the funny bone. He has an awful haircut, a reliable sign of a sense of humour in a medic. As a student, he was no doubt a major player in rag week, and in my experience, they always turn into the doctors with the best bedside manner. Trust me, my brother's a doctor.

In tune with Hammond's links, there is something wacky about the show's choice of topics. Last week, the programme tested two folkloric suspicions for scientific accuracy: that garlic is good for you (it is), and that immersing yourself in cold water is good for you (it isn't). I once killed a bad cold stone dead by drinking warm milk in which seven cloves of garlic had been boiled for 20 minutes. The Italian forester who recommended the recipe didn't mention anything about garlic's other function, reported here, as a low-rent herbal Viagra. You could have done with some advice on how much you have to consume to enhance durability – enough, I imagine, to ensure that no one would touch your bargepole with a bargepole.

The tone of the show is light-hearted, which is why Friday evening seems the right place in the schedule for it. It's basically *Eurotrash* with a stethoscope. This week, Hammond introduced an item about phobias with a python wrapped round his neck. For the report on pelvic floor exercises he was pumping iron. Between each film there are little inserts featuring bizarre health tips, such as "sniffing chocolates boosts your antibody levels", or "regular exercise improves your hearing", or "farting helps prevent diabetes". I made that one up, and I wonder whether they do, too.

But the show is capable of wiping the smirk off its face. Hammond donned his implacable expression to remind us that six years ago it was he who broke the story in *Private Eye* about the high mortality rate for heart operations on babies in Bristol Royal Infirmary. This week, the programme reported on another danger for babies suffering from biliary atresia, a rare malformation of the bile duct which poisons the liver. The complicated operation to treat the condition is called a kasai. The success rate for the kasai is dramatically better in the country's few specialist liver units, but because the NHS trust system encourages hospitals to do operations locally, other hospitals continue to perform the kasai despite appalling results. A hospital in Nottingham only stopped doing the kasai when they reviewed their records and discovered that 19 out of 20 times, the patient had died.

The Department of Health refused an interview but issued a statement saying that they "acknowledged that it has been clear since 1985 that the best results are achieved at specialist liver units".

It's not often you see campaigning journalism broadcast on a Friday night amid the garden makeovers, the carpet-bombing of American comedies and, on Britain's worst channel, programmes like Britain's Worst Pets (ITV). There were more pythons on display here. One of them slithered into his owner's loo in a top-floor flat and snaked down into the bathroom of a firm of surveyors on the ground floor. Another python ate his owner's dog. It's clear that the programme should have been called *Britain's Worst Pet Owners*. How stupid do you have to be to put a large snake in a room with another lunch-sized animal? The python then nearly crushed its owner to death. "I think he was just trying to give me a shock," she said.

But most of Britain's worst pet owners have dogs. One had fed her Pomeranian to four times its natural body weight. The only thing it will now cross the room for is food. It is taken for walks in a pushchair. Apparently, the average annual expenditure on a dog is £4,000. Most of these owners would have used the money more wisely on a shrink, especially the woman who spends a further £3,000 a time getting her dogs stuffed. "I can assure you that I am not eccentric," she said, as she tucked her dead dogs into their display cabinet for the night. Her dogs were no longer barking, but she was.

BBC1

7.00 The Munsters (T) (6605447). **7.25** News; Weather (3798911).

7.30 Children's BBC: Fireman Sam (R) (6126973). **7.40** Little Monsters (S) (6069737). **7.50** The Incredible Hulk (R) (T) (2120927). **8.15** Hero Turtles – the Next Mutation (S) (2692718). **8.35** The Flintstones (R) (S) (9881263). **9.00** Live and Kicking (S) (63892718).

12.10 News; Weather (T) (8047331).

12.15 Grandstand (S) (8046602). **12.20** Football Focus (5348114). **1.10** Racing from Haydock Park (94798379). **1.25** Athletics (94779602). **1.40** Racing from Haydock Park (47466027). **1.55** Boxing (47449350). **2.10** Racing from Haydock Park (35811089). **2.25** Around the Grounds (52007008). **2.35** *Racing from Haydock Park* (4683756). **2.55** Rugby League: Leeds vs St Helens. Live coverage of the Challenge Cup fifth-round tie from Headingley (kick-off at 3pm) (2994466). **3.45** Football Half-Times (2533282). **3.55** Rugby League (2938602). **4.45** Final Score (4912824).

5.50 News; Weather (T) (457176).

6.00 Regional News and Weather (537911).

6 PM

6.05 Get Your Act Together. With London band Monty and Preston's Gary Dee Etages (S) (T) (734737).

6.35 Big Break. Jim Davidson and star potters Andy Hicks, Dennis Taylor and Willie Thorne help out more contestants (S) (T) (890992).

7 PM

7.05 Noel's House Party (S) (273350).

7.50 The National Lottery – We've Got Your Number. The latest attempt to make the National Lottery draw work as a TV show. Brian Conley hosts it this time around (S) (T) (739737).

8 PM

8.15 Casualty. The guest crisis this week involves a bickering family on their way to visit an elderly relative. How will they end up in Holby A&E? Will they crash on the dual carriageway – or will the old biddy have collapsed on the bathroom floor when they arrive? (S) (T) (916089).

9 PM

9.05 City Central. The second series of this northern plod drama begins tonight. Set in a thinly-disguised Manchester, the cast includes former *EastEnders* heart-throb Paul Nicholls. Tonight's opener involves the knifing of a clergyman (S) (T) (437718).

9.55 Holiday Reps. Perhaps buoyed up by the success of their holiday reps drama *Sunburn* – which finished its first series last week – the BBC has repackaged episodes of this recent docu-soap (S) (T) (691602).

10 PM

10.20 News; Weather (T) (850553).

10.35 Match of the Day. Desmond Lynam introduces all the goals and action from the Premiership, with chief highlights coming from Liverpool's visit to Chelsea this afternoon (S) (T) (8128282).

11.45 The 41st Annual Grammy Awards. Jamie Theakston introduces highlights from Los Angeles of the prestigious music awards (S) (891282).

1.15 *Top of the Pops* (S) (T) (95616).

1.45 FILM Terror from the Year 5000 (Robert J Gurney Jr 1958 US). Merry cheapo exploiter about a disfigured sexpot from the year 5000 who is transported back to the year 1958 (Then *Weather*) (3385751). To 3am.

BBC2

6.35 Open University: Fighting for Space (9110602). **7.05** Traps – and How to Get Out of Them (6695080). **7.30** Music to the Ear (10909). **8.00** Weekend 24 (S) (68602). **9.00** Personal Passions (4389089). **9.15** Open Saturday (9492911). **10.35** Cyber Art (3134805). **10.40** See Hear! (9805398). **11.25** Food and Drink (6009114).

11.55 FILM The Tarnished Angels (Douglas Sirk 1957 US). The first of two films today on BBC2 about pioneer aviators (how do they think up these themes?) stars Rock Hudson as a New Orleans reporter who gets involved with an air circus. Based on William Faulkner's 1930s drama, *Pylon* (T) (9705669).

1.25 FILM Barefoot in the Park (Gene Saks 1967 US). Harmless and now almost nostalgic Neil Simon comedy about middle-class newlyweds Robert Redford and Jane Fonda making a go of it in the bohemian squalor of Greenwich Village (16251973).

3.05 One Man and His Dog (3899398). **3.35** Space 1999 (R) (2956008). **4.25** International Tennis (S) (4589466).

5.25 TOTP 2. The Stones, Nik Kershaw, Bon Jovi and Shakin' Stevens retrieved from the archives (9939621).

6.10 Scrutiny. Reports on the Inter Parliamentary Union, a club for MPs and peers which enables its members to meet their counterparts (S) (152008).

6.50 Correspondent. Andrew Harding is in Moscow, from where he examines the Russian quest for new icons to replace the old certainties. And in *San El Salvador*, Tom Gibb goes underground with street gangs (S) (T) (936282).

7.35 What the Papers Say Awards 1998. Clive Anderson presents the 42nd annual journalism awards bash from the Savoy Hotel in London (S) (400718).

8.15 The Cold War: China 1949-72. In 1949, Mao Tse-tung led his People's Liberation Army to victory over the American-backed Nationalists; 1972 was the year of President Nixon's historic trip to Beijing. In between lay what the Chinese call "interesting times", including the Cultural Revolution, mass starvation and the creation of the world's third superpower (S) (T) (907331).

9.05 FILM The Great Waldo Pepper (George Roy Hill 1975 US). The second of today's two aerial yarns, and the second of two BBC2 films today to star Robert Redford. This is *Butch Cassidy* director George Roy Hill's shiny, superficial *Boys' Own* adventure with Redford as the Great War ace who's taken to stunt-flying in the Midwest of the 1920s. Given to bragging about his dogfights with German air ace Bo Svenson, his bluff is called when the said Teuton turns up in Los Angeles (T) (55628027).

10.50 If I Ruled the World. Vote, vote, vote for John Thomson and Linda Smith (S) (T) (637331).

11.20 CHOICE Scene by Scene with Jonathan Demme. *The Silence of the Lambs* director reviews his career with Mark Cousins. See *Profile of the Day*, below (S) (T) (193718).

12.10 CHOICE Melvin and Howard (Jonathan Demme 1980 US). Demme's lyrical comedy drama about an ordinary Joe who gives billionaire Howard Hughes a lift and ends up inheriting millions. *See Film of the Day*, below (Followed by *Weatherview*) (T) (673751). To 3am.

ITV LWT

6.00 GMTV (8719850).

9.25 SMTV Live. Claire from Steps guest hosts with Ant and Dec as they hear from Cleopatra and Take 5. Ask a teenager (S) (34468350).

11.30 CD UK (S) (79089). **12.30** Wannabe (S) (T) (26843). **1.00** ITN News; Weather (T) (53853553). **1.05** London Weekend Today (T) (54203094). **1.10** On the Ball (T) (9419350). **1.45** NBA 99 (T) (6173756).

2.20 FILM Danielle Steel's No Greater Love (Richard Heffron 1995 US). Kelly Rutherford plays a young woman in mourning after the death of her family and her fiancé on the *Titanic*. She hasn't quite lost everything, however, as she has inherited the running of a newspaper business in Boston. Now read on... (7731553).

3.50 Early Edition (S) (7700114). **4.45** ITN News; Sports Results; Weather (T) (7138331). **5.05** London Weekend Tonight (T) (8259534). **5.20** Cartoon Time (8261379).

5.40 The New Addams Family. TV spin-off from the recent movies rather than a remake of the old TV series, apparently (343911).

6.10 Don't Try This at Home! A man attempting to bungee-jump under a paraglider; a novel way of pushing a Mercedes across the studio floor; and a challenge involving a quad bike, two water skiers and a kangaroo. Davina McCall has the details (S) (T) (161621).

7.10 Blind Date. How did Stacey and Sara fare on their circus date, and what about Glynn and Becky in Israel? (S) (T) (833756).

8.10 Family Fortunes. The Dadds family from North Devon play the Medley family from Tamworth (S) (T) (138244).

8.40 ITN News; Weather; Lottery Result (T) (919331).

8.55 FILM Crimson Tide (Tony Scott 1995 US). *Fail Safe, The Caine Mutiny, The Hunt for Red October* and several other films one could mention are thrown into the pot of this post-Cold War thriller in which renegade ultra-nationalists in the former USSR seize a Russian nuclear-missile base and threaten to nuke the USA. The main conflict, however, is the face-off between grizzled Cold War veteran submarine commander Gene Hackman and his subordinate, Denzel Washington, who has reservations about kick-starting *Armageddon* (S) (T) (10194640).

11.05 The Big Fight Live. Liverpudlian Colin Dunne takes on South Africa's Phillip Holiday for the world light-welterweight crown. Or for one of them, at least. Subsequent programmes may run late (T) (215379).

12.05 Snooker: Liverpool Victoria Charity Challenge (3830886). **1.35** The Jerry Springer Show (1244799). **2.15** Baywatch Nights (S) (3646003). **3.05** Box Office America (R) (80859867). **3.30** World Football (40781515). **3.55** CD UK (S) (4338886). **4.50** ITV Nightscreen (5943596). **5.30** News (21190). To 6am.

Channel 4

6.00 Sesame Street (R) (59805). **7.00** T4: Bush Tales (R) (3702114). **7.05** T4: Dig, Dug and Daisy (6613282). **7.20** T4: Animal Alphabet (R) (3773602). **7.30** T4: Pippi Longstocking (S) (T) (92447). **8.00** T4: Transworld Sport (R) (93398). **9.00** Morning Line (S) (89534). **10.00** Inside Rugby with Thierry Lacroix (81331). **11.00** Gazzetta Football Italia (R) (T) (10945). **12.00** Boardstupid Goes Skiing (91832). **1.00** High 5 (T) (9428008). **1.35** Rex Hunt's Fishing Adventures (R) (13170992). **1.55** Happy Days (R) (25337263).

2.25 Channel 4 Racing from Kempton Park. Derek Thompson introduces the day's nag action from Kempton Park, featuring the 2.35, 3.05, 3.35, 4.10 and 4.40pm races (85550282).

5.05 Brookside Omnibus. All the week's Mersey grief in full, with Emily feeling neglected, Ryan determined to prove Luke's innocence and Jackie feeling downtrodden (R) (S) (T) (5725331).

6.30 Channel 4 News; Weather. Presented by Jon Snow and including all Saturday's sporting news (T) (718).

7.00 Right to Reply. Roger Bolton introduces viewers' points of view (T) (8553).

7.30 The Spying Game. This entertaining series moves on to the complicated art of counter-intelligence, helped along by the reminiscences of Soviet double agent Oleg Penkovsky (S) (T) (602).

8.00 Rural Rides. On the first anniversary of last year's Countryside March, Elinor Goodman looks at the problems and fears of people living in rural areas. She travels around the country on horseback to talk to landowners and environmentalists. Has anything changed since last year's outcry? (T) (9534).

9.00 FILM Soylent Green (Richard Fleischer 1972 US). Very witty and topical of Channel 4, given the current furore over genetically-modified, so-called "Frankenfoods", to screen this sci-fi tale in which 21st-century cop Charlton Heston learns the shocking truth about the synthetic foodstuffs being fed to the population of New York. Edward G Robinson is the elderly friend, due for euthanasia, who can still remember the good old days of the late 20th century (55814824).

10.45 Sex and the City. Carrie ponders the consequences of using sex for personal gain when a French architect gives her $1,000 after a date. As if (T) (982553).

11.15 Queer as Folk (552447).

11.50 CHOICE John Peel's Sounds of the Suburbs. Peel visits the places that have fuelled our pop heritage. See *Documentary of the Day*, below (716718).

12.30 Exploitica – Just Say No (71082). **1.00** Pop-Up Video (4913157). **1.25** Alice in Acidland (4983916).

1.55 FILM 4 Later: Alice in Acidland (Cheshire Cat 1968 US). Very silly cautionary tale of a Sixties college girl who goes to pot (2170138). To 2.50am.

Channel 5

6.00 Dappledown Farm (R) (27933553). **6.25** Pionsters (R) (52719640). **6.30** Havakazoo (R) (8165398). **7.00** 5 News and Sport (S) (8476843). **7.30** Milkshake! (S) (3791517). **7.35** Wimzie's House (R) (S) (3638669). **8.00** Lassie (R) (S) (4404843). **8.30** Wishbone (R) (S) (4403114). **9.00** *Land of the Lost* (R) (4494466). **9.30** Kablam! (R) (S) (9415080). **10.00** Loggerheads (R) (8149350). **10.30** The Wonder Years (4483350). **11.00** The Pepsi Chart (R) (S) (T) (2431718). **11.30** Footy Shorts (42767602). **11.45** Beverly Hills, 90210 (R) (S) (T) (1517195). **12.40** Singled Out (R) (S) (48981640). **1.05** Bang Liberty (R) (S) (89957114). **1.30** RAD (81552350). **1.50** 5 News (S) (15626911).

2.00 Sportsweek on 5. Gail McKenna links this desperate mix of winter-sports action from Colorado, with ice-hockey, motorcycle-supercross and Argentinian soccer highlights (S) (1232114).

3.30 Sunset Beach Omnibus (R) (S) (T) (33467783).

5.55 5 News and Sport (S) (T) (7420832).

6.00 Hercules: the Legendary Journeys. Princess Xena joins forces with Hercules when her troops revolt against her (R) (S) (8052517).

6.55 Night Fever. Suggs hosts the karaoke entertainment show – and this week's guests include Steps (R) (S) (9932195).

7.45 5 News and Sport (S) (T) (6516350).

8.05 The World's Wildest Daredevils. Footage of an array of bold stunts from around the world, including freefalls from great heights, high-speed car crashes, etc, etc, etc (S) (4680756).

9.00 FILM Inflammable (Peter Werner 1995 US). Nautical thriller starring Marg Helgenberger as an inexperienced Navy lawyer who finds herself entangled in the inevitable web of sex, drugs and murder when she boards a US warship to investigate a murder and attempted rape. Kris Kristofferson is the initially hostile ship's captain (S) (T) (44992992).

10.40 Love Street. More porn from Channel 5 (6662379).

11.05 Smooth Operator. And more porn (9528337).

12.35 FILM Executive Action (David Miller 1973 US). This thriller about John F Kennedy's assassination (based on evidence that the Warren Commission refused to hear) was Robert Ryan's last film. With Burt Lancaster (9163062).

2.15 FILM Shadows and Fog (Woody Allen 1992 US). Woody Allen and John Malkovich star in Allen's unusual comedy drama (6125664). To 3.50am.

TELEVISION GUIDE BY GERARD GILBERT

PROFILE OF THE DAY

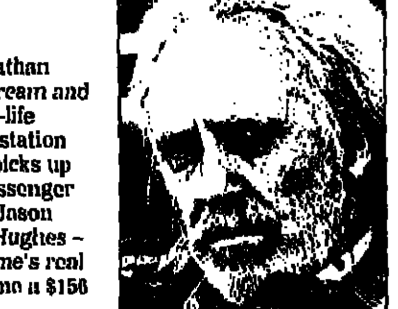
SCENE BY SCENE WITH JONATHAN DEMME (11.20pm BBC2, *right*) Mark Cousins conducts another of his projector-side chats – this time with that maverick talent of modern American cinema, Jonathan Demme. The man himself is demonstrably well-balanced for a movie genius, talking Cousins through a career that began as a publicist for Roger Corman's New World Pictures. Corman, apparently, just told Demme that if he could write a press release he could probably write a movie, before handing him a motorcycle gang exploitation movie to direct. Demme went on to make *Something Wild, The Silence of the Lambs* and tonight's film, *Melvin and Howard*.

DOCUMENTARY OF THE DAY

JOHN PEEL'S SOUNDS OF THE SUBURBS (11.50pm C4) John Peel (*right*) – in a series of woolly hats that make him look a bit like Jack Nicholson in *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* – sets off on a tour of Britain's town and suburbs to try to discover what it is about them that has made them the creative hub of a world-beating pop music industry. His first stop is the post-industrial landscape of Lanarkshire to the south of Glasgow, where he meets Sean Dixon, once of the Soup Dragons (and now of High Fidelity), the Delgados of Ravenscraig and, in East Kilbride, the BMX Bandits. Never heard of them? Well, they have in Japan.

FILM OF THE DAY

MELVIN AND HOWARD (12.10am BBC2, *right*) Jonathan Demme's lovely 1980 comedy about the American Dream and the meaning of happiness – extrapolated from a real-life incident in which amiable Nevada milkman and gas-station attendant Melvin Dummar (played by Paul LeMat) picks up what he takes to be a tramp in the desert, but his passenger turns out to be grizzled billionaire Howard Hughes. Jason Robards gives a beautifully judged performance as Hughes – all long, straggly hair and burnt-out eyes – but Demme's real affinity is with Melvin, the perpetual loser who became a $156 million beneficiary of one of Hughes' wills.

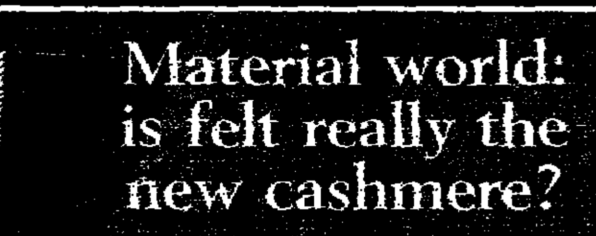


THE INDEPENDENT

Saturday 27 February 1999

YOUR MONEY

HOW TO MAKE IT • HOW TO SPEND IT



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Get yourself protected

It's vital to insure your mortgage repayments. But can you afford it? By Teresa Hunter

Despite falling interest rates and a stable housing market, the long lines of weary home owners queuing at Shelter offices for advice on avoiding repossession show little signs of diminishing. Quite the reverse. Most of us can expect to fall ill or lose our jobs at some stage during our working lives and, without adequate savings or insurance, thereby make it impossible to meet mortgage repayments.

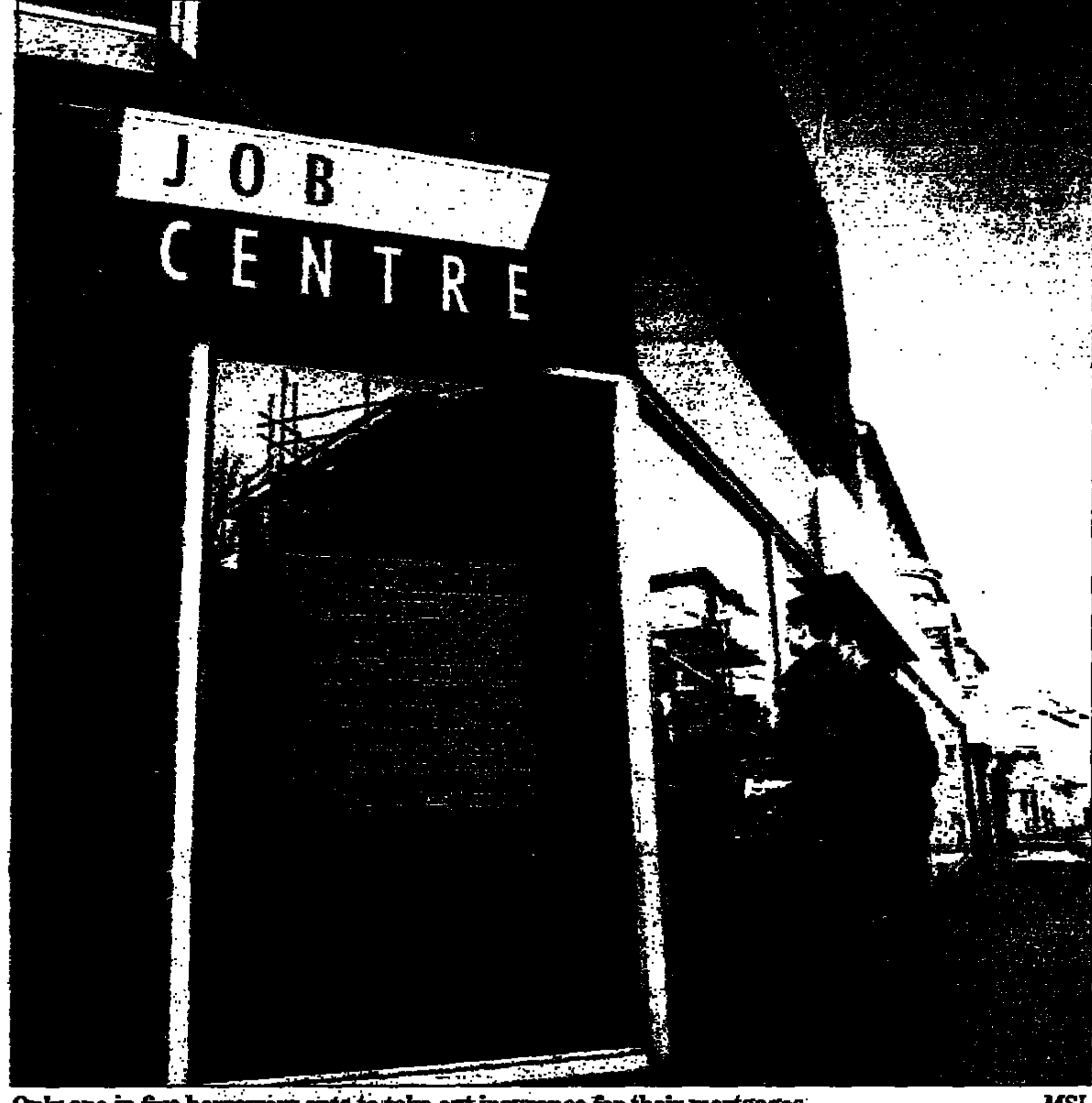
Government support to home owners has been cut back sharply since the beginning of the decade to a point where only a minority will be in a position to qualify for state support to pay their monthly mortgage bill. Most lenders begin repossession procedures after missing just two monthly payments.

During the last recession, private mortgage insurance providers became charred by a reputation for wriggling through every loophole and clause to avoid meeting claims. However, this week mortgage lenders and insurance companies, backed by the Government, have launched a new initiative which is aimed at removing the potential for grief from home ownership. They have produced a new-style insurance policy that is designed to iron out many of the flaws of the old contracts and to provide most home owners with a basic level of security.

However, critics maintain that for all its good intentions, those on the margin of owner occupation remain as vulnerable as ever. Worse still, these new policies could provide a Government determined to shrink the welfare bill, with a springboard to cut state support yet further.

Changes to income support have meant that since October 1995, anyone who bought or re-mortgaged a property will not have the interest paid on their mortgage for the first nine months if they have an accident, fall sick or become unemployed. Moreover mortgage interest is unlikely to be paid if you have a working partner or savings of more than £3,000. And any mortgage above £100,000, not an immodest amount in the South East, is excluded.

All of which explains why mortgage repossessions are still running at 33,000 a year, and are almost guaranteed to soar well beyond the 1991 peak of 75,000 if the economy does head into a serious recession.



Only one in five borrowers opts to take out insurance for their mortgages MSI

To avert a potential crisis, therefore, mortgage lenders are eager to encourage as many people as possible to protect themselves by buying insurance against sickness and unemployment. Currently only one in five borrowers opts for protection which the Government estimates at least 55 per cent of all home buyers need.

To make the policies more attractive the Council of Mortgage Lenders has produced a quasi-code, guaranteeing minimum standards. All policies, for example, must pay out after 60 days, and cover repayments for a year. There should be fewer automatic exclusions for pre-existing medical conditions. Furthermore contract workers can be covered if they have worked for the same employer for at least a year. Similarly, the self-employed can claim, provided they actually wind up their business.

Such basic cover will be mandatory for all policies sold after July, although lenders have until July 2001 to bring existing contracts into line. This could be described as an unreasonably generous timetable, given that four of our major lenders – the Halifax, Abbey National, Nationwide and Woolwich – admitted that some of their existing policies would need to be altered.

Despite these reforms Shelter says the new contracts still do too little to help those in most need. A spokesman explains: "The people who need this are still less likely to buy it than those in secure jobs with surplus income who probably don't need it at all.

"The low-paid, contract workers, and those who rely on overtime, commission and bonuses, always existed in the housing market only at the margins. There is no decline in the numbers of desperate people visiting our offices pleading for help to keep the roof over their heads.

"More worryingly we are seeing a new category of people desperate for help, who never thought their home might be at risk. These are the middle-aged, middle-class, often small business owners, who due to ill health, unemployment or recession are suddenly unable to meet their repayments and find themselves facing the prospect of losing the family home. If you lose your job or your business at 55, you will not recover.

"There is quite a bit of anecdotal evidence suggesting that lenders are moving more quickly to repossess than ever, because the relatively buoyant housing market allows them to minimise their loss by selling quickly."

Shelter is also very concerned that the position will be exacerbated by the new breed of flexible mortgages that allow home owners to borrow up to the hilt using their houses as security. Furthermore some, even within the industry, fear extending the cover for 12 months could trigger a further clawback of state support.

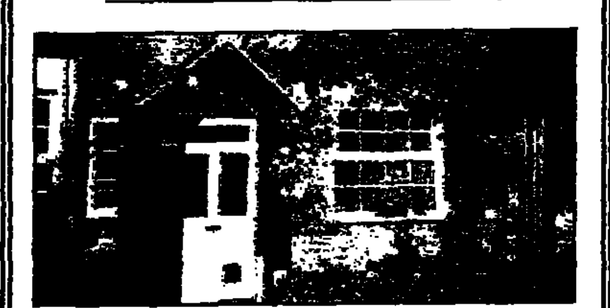
A spokesman for the Council of Mortgage Lenders says: "There has been some speculation that they could extend to a year the period during which they will not pay income support, but we are not aware of any imminent changes planned."

Finally the new policy does nothing to address the high cost of cover, which desirable though it may be, is often beyond the already stretched budgets of most home buyers. Although the majority of lenders say they will improve their cover to at least match that of the new basic prototype without any additional charges, the existing cost is expensive at around £5.75 per £100 of monthly mortgage repayment.

Even at today's very low interest rates this adds £25 to the monthly bill of a £60,000 mortgage. Worse still, this doubles if you want to insure two incomes, increasingly vital to protecting a modern mortgage.

And there's no looking to the Government for help on that front. More likely it will move to stem mortgage interest tax relief further in the next budget, in itself adding £17.33 to most people's home-loan bill. As the song says: the only way – for home-ownership bills at least – is up.

BARGAIN HUNTER



Property of the week
Rode to joy

JUST OVER £12,500 has been knocked off the price of this two-bedroom cottage in Rode, once a cloth-producing village, four miles from Frome, in Somerset, and 11 miles from Bath. About 250 years old (as are many other buildings in the village) and tucked away by the village green, the three-storey semi has roses around the door, a new bathroom, fitted kitchen and cosy sitting room with brick fireplace. The present owners have reduced the price for a quick sale, so it's yours for £79,950 through Palmer Snell (01225 448440).

ROSALIND RUSSELL

Car of the week
The £13,600 Jaguar XJ6

"GRACE, SPACE and pace" ran the ads for Jaguar saloons in the Sixties, a rare example of hype-free advertising. One thing about Jaguars was that they depreciated like a brick dropped from a tower block. The bad news for new buyers is that they still do. Which makes Jaguars great used buys, especially as owners Ford have improved build quality to stratospheric heights.

The beautifully restyled XJ6 in 1994 looked and performed brilliantly. In 3.2 litre sport trim it would have cost over £31,000. But Kempshott Cars (01256 817356) has such a car, with 72,000 miles on the clock, a British racing green finish and a full service record, for just £13,695. About the cost of a new Ford Focus 1.6 Ghia saloon. Which would you choose?

JAMES RUPPERT

Deal of the week
The good life insurance

ANYONE NEEDING a mortgage will be told they must have life insurance too. The reason is that the lender wants the insurance to pay off the loan if you die. The bright side is that at least your beneficiaries will get the house for nothing. This is a simple product (you die, they pay out), and the market is highly competitive. One company featured before in this column is Life-Search (0845 6030401). Its premise is simple: it will undercut any other offer in the market.

Now there's better: TQ Direct, in Wolverhampton, will rebate back two thirds of the commission it would otherwise earn on a deal. In plain language, that means hundreds of pounds in your pocket. The number is 0800 0561838. So now you know.

Of course, you could always call TQ Direct, get a quote and then see what Life-Search does. But that would be cheating, wouldn't it?

NIC CICUTTI

Mr Bradford and Mr Bingley: martyrs to the mutual cause

The bowler-hatted duo have been sacrificed as the B&B acts to avoid becoming another victim of the forces of conversion. By Andrew Verity

BRADFORD & BINGLEY this week mounted a new offensive in the battle for the survival of the building society movement, launching three major initiatives aimed at proving the benefits of its mutual status.

Anxious to squash any suggestion that building societies are old-fashioned, B&B's first move was to ditch what it had discovered was a dangerously dated image: the bowler-hatted Mr Bradford and Mr Bingley.

Research – showing the pair are considered "sexist" by a majority of women customers – prompted the society to overhaul its trademark, instead introducing a new logo consisting of a rainbow-coloured montage of "sexless" bowler hats.

But the society's attempt to preserve itself goes further than a change of image. In April it faces a vote on a proposal from Stephen Major, a plumber in Lisburn, Northern Ireland, that the board take steps to become a bank.

As part of its campaign against the move, B&B has become the first big mortgage lender to launch a service designed to protect home buyers from the traditional pitfalls of house purchase.

In line with government reforms designed to make house buying easier, buyers visiting B&B estate agents after April will be able to get a survey of the home they want to purchase before they put in an offer.

Property buyers and sellers will also be offered insurance cover against hitches in the buying process, protecting themselves against an adverse survey further down the house-buying chain, an adverse valuation, or even unreasonable conduct by the other party.

Buyers taking part in the "Fast Move" initiative will also be offered a mortgage guaranteed to be extended on completion, as long as their credit records are clean. And they will receive a guarantee against structural faults in the property they buy if they are not disclosed in the survey.

The initiative, designed to cut by half the time that it takes to complete a purchase, comes at a turbulent time for the building society, which is seeking to persuade its 2.5 million members, many of them carpetbaggers to begin with, to keep the society mutual.

B&B is also seeking to prove it can offer better rates on its savings products than rivals, such as the Halifax and the Northern Rock, that have converted to banks. A series of tax-efficient Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs), matching government-approved "CAT-standards", will become available on 6 April.

To underline the benefits of mutuality, B&B is hoping to outclass its converted rivals by offering better interest rates. Its ISA will guarantee to match bank base rates, currently 5.5 per cent, throughout 1999. Existing members of B&B will get a bonus of a further 1 per cent in interest for the first year.

B&B's fight to stay mutual means that the new ISAs will only be open to existing members; the society was forced to shut its doors to new customers to ward off the threat of an influx of carpetbaggers.

In league tables of savings account interest rates, building societies have been able to dominate the upper ranks, offering interest that is approaching base rates on instant access.

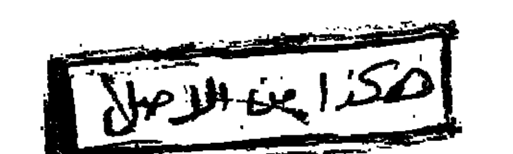
But they are increasingly facing a challenge from another group that claims to have an even better advantage than the mutuals. "Direct banks" say that they can offer higher rates because they do not have to pay the cost of an expensive branch network. Postal banks such as Egg, owned by the Prudential, and Standard Life Bank, are challenging them for the new funds.

Both Egg and Standard Life Bank are beating the rates offered by building societies by attracting business without using a branch network – both over the Internet and over the phone. In its first six months of operation alone, Egg attracted over £3bn – compared to total deposits of £6.7bn at B&B.

Christopher Rodrigues, B&B's chief executive, believes the direct banks are buying business, using shareholders' funds to offer high rates of interest that cannot last. He claims the rate-hunting customers will quickly disappear when the rates no longer top the tables.

"The biggest impact of Egg taking that much money is on Prudential shareholders, since they are paying for it," he says. "All the indications are that those customers are not loyal: they churn their money. And customers who churn are very expensive: I guarantee you that at some time Pru shareholders will not let them pay those rates." He must be hoping his customers agree.

See Nic Cicutti's column, page 2





Nic Cicutti

Sharing in the annual profit is better than greedily voting for a one-off set of shares

EVERY TIME I write about mutuality, a flood of letters arrives chiding me for arguing in favour of building societies (and insurers, for that matter) remaining in the hands of their members. Doubtlessly another pile will land on my desk in the coming week.

But one can't help discussing the issue, especially in the wake of Bradford & Bingley's announcement this week of a new package of financial services initiatives for its members, a package that is aimed partly at defending its mutuality in a ballot due to be launched next month.

B&B's measures are discussed elsewhere in this section, and readers will have to make up their own minds as to which way they will sway voters who are deciding whether to back or to oppose a resolution in favour of flotation.

First, let me declare an interest. I am a B&B member and will be casting my vote against the resolution. I wish I could say that the package unveiled this week will help me do that. Sadly, it won't – of itself – though it may do so, in other ways.

Take the society's plans for its estate agency chain. The concept of a "sellers' survey" aimed at speeding up the sale of a property through B&B's estate agency chain is a good one. Except that the two areas in which I am buying and selling a property don't have a B&B agent. Geographical limitations mean that that idea doesn't help me at all.

As for its offer to lend a mortgage of up to 95 per cent of a home's value to buyers of a property being sold with one of B&B's sellers' surveys, that all depends on whether a B&B loan is the right one for borrowers. Nothing that B&B has available at present particularly attracts me. Sorry.

Then there's the planned expansion of B&B's network of independent financial advisers (IFAs). The trouble is, I don't really think much of B&B's IFA network.

Its advisers sell a narrow range of financial products from a "panel" selected for them. Their "independence" is a source of much mockery among genuine IFAs. B&B contends that its products (and, by implication, its advisers) are designed to suit "Middle England". However, even if you accept such a lumping together of so many individual needs, that doesn't mean they would suit me.

B&B's proposals for a range of Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) might be attractive (as its other savings rates undoubtedly are). However, we will only be in a better position to tell once other institutions announce their cash ISA rates after April 6.

But, you might ask, if B&B's products are so unattractive at present, why defend its mutuality? Partly because there are some savings accounts which are still highly competitive. And its mortgages, though not personally appealing, are also very good value.

And because, ultimately, I believe that mutuality must survive on the basis that, even if something is not always good for me, it may still benefit someone else. At some stage in the future there will almost certainly be something in the B&B range that suits my personal needs. Give and take, in other words.

Sure, it ain't always the most exciting (or financially rewarding) concept in the world. But allowing others a greater share in the annual £110m members' profit-share from B&B – this once – has got to be better than greedily voting for a one-off set of shares worth £750 from the society's flotation. Or am I wrong?

It's simple, yet subtle

FINANCIAL MAKEOVER

NAME: JIM CHOI **AGE:** 34 **OCCUPATION:** FREELANCE WRITER

In common with most us, Jim has a number of simple financial priorities: his pension arrangements, his mortgage, his investments, and how to protect himself, his partner Kristina, and the couple's young child, in the event of anything happening to him.

Where he differs slightly from some people is that he is self-employed. This places different priorities on how he plans his finances.

For instance, whereas someone with a regular job might already be a member of a company pension scheme, Jim must fend for himself. And while a employer might offer death-in-service benefits of up to four times income, and a proper sickness scheme, Jim will have to take out private cover if he wants to protect his income and his family.

What are his present financial arrangements? From an income of about £18,000 last year, he puts away £175 a month into a with-profits personal pension with Equitable Life.

He has few savings at present, beyond a business account with Portman Building Society into which he places the money he may need to pay off his annual tax bill.

As for the mortgage, Jim pays interest on the loan, while the endowment is in his partner's name. He has separate life cover for himself, which would pay off the mortgage if anything were to happen to him.



Being self-employed, Jim Choi's financial arrangements need looking at carefully *Mark Chilvers*

The adviser: Ian Millward, investment marketing manager at Chase De Vere, independent financial advisers, 2 Queen Square, Bath, BA1 2HD (01225 469 371).

The advice: Jim has enough life cover for the mortgage, but realistically he should aim to have at least an additional £150,000 of cover to provide a lump sum for his partner and child, should he die. This shouldn't be too expensive. For example, on normal terms, Scottish Provident quotes a monthly premium of £19.36 for £150,000 cover on a 20-year term.

Permanent health insurance is also essential in Jim's position, as this will provide a regular income should he become unable to work for the long term. One way of reducing the cost is to opt for a longer period before the cover comes in. For example, if the deferment period is four weeks, the cost of cover with Friends Provident is £36.45. Opting for a deferred period of 26 weeks cuts the cost to £18.59.

Jim could also consider critical illness cover, which will pay out a lump sum on diagnosis of serious illness. This is becoming more popular these days, but can be expensive.

Another area Jim should consider is his mortgage. He currently has a variable rate mortgage with the Halifax at 6.95 per cent, backed by an endowment with Legal & General.

Endowments are often criticised, as they tend to be quite inflexible and expensive in the early years. But in his situation it is best to continue with the endowment and accept that it should deliver a reasonable lump sum at the end of the period. There are plenty of good mortgage offers around these days, but bearing in mind that Jim is self-employed and his income stream may not be as reliable as that of a paid employee, he does need an element of security.

Coventry Building Society is currently offering a five-year variable rate mortgage, capped at 5.75 per cent. If rates continue to fall Jim will benefit. The other beauty of this scheme is that it has no penalties after five years, and includes a free valuation, plus no arrangement fees or legal costs.

Looking at the rest of his finances, Jim seems to be in reasonable condition. He regularly puts money aside to pay his tax bill. He has done reasonably well on windfall and privatisation shares, holding a total portfolio worth approximately £3,200. Whether he should continue holding these is another matter. It may be he should consider other options. If he is happy that he wants to be looking at stockmarket-based investment, a pooled vehicle, such as a unit trust, investment trust or OEIC may suit him better. Where possible, he should look to wrap this up in a tax-efficient shelter, such as a PEP or, after 5 April 1999, an ISA.

Finally, Jim needs to consider his pension. His existing scheme is with Equitable Life. In a with-profits fund, bonuses are added on a regular basis, so returns should be smooth and steady, unlike a unit-linked investment where the fund will move in line with the stockmarket. Generally, you would expect a unit-linked fund to deliver superior performance over the longer term and Jim has been considering moving some of his pension fund out of with-profits.

However, the Equitable Life with-profits fund has performed well, while some of its unit-linked management is not really as good. On this occasion, I would suggest that should continue investing his premiums in the with-profits fund.

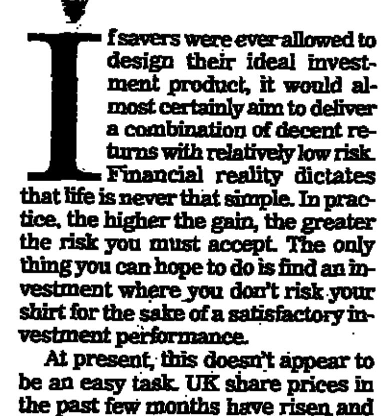
- Pension arrangements from his previous employment also need reviewing. He needs to consider whether it is worth transferring these either into his personal pension or another vehicle, and whether or not this will give a better return than just leaving them where they are. He needs to speak to an adviser who can offer a specialist service looking at, as any decision will need to take into account transfer penalties, the initial costs of transferring and the likely values in the future.

This can be done – at a cost. But it might be worthwhile, both in terms of helping him decide what to do, and also for peace of mind.

If you are interested in a free financial makeover, where an independent adviser will discuss your finances and offer solutions to your financial needs, write to: Andrew Verity, Free Makeover, 'The Independent', One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. You must be prepared for your name and picture to appear in the paper

Give me dull any day

They're not the most exciting investment, but with-profit bonds have their place. By Nic Cicutti



If savers were ever allowed to design their ideal investment product, it would almost certainly aim to deliver a combination of decent returns with relatively low risk. Financial reality dictates that life is never that simple. In practice, the higher the gain, the greater the risk you must accept. The only thing you can hope to do is find an investment where you don't risk your shirt for the sake of a satisfactory investment performance.

At present, this doesn't appear to be an easy task. UK share prices in the past few months have risen and fallen by up to 5 per cent in the space of a few days. This week, they closed at record highs. But many experts still fear things could rapidly turn sour.

Charles Timm, managing director at The With-Profits Bond Shop, says: "Many members of the public who are ringing us up at the moment are saying that they are getting very nervous about the way share prices appear to be moving recently. They are also worried about the volatility we have been seeing recently in the markets. There is [still] a view that there could be a major correction."

For hundreds of thousands of investors, with-profits bonds offer that seemingly elusive blend. Their investment mix – a combination of equities, fixed interest securities and property – are designed so that while bondholders can expect better returns than from a typical building society account, the risk required to obtain it is not that great.

Unlike traditional equity-based investments – which can rise like a rocket and drop like a stone within the space of a day – bonds behave differently. They are designed so that each year, an annual bonus is added to the original sum invested. This "reversionary bonus" is allocated in one of two forms. For traditional with-profits policies, it is based on an actual amount added to the value of the policy. So-called "unitised" policies, where the policy is divided into units, will add a few percentage points to the value of each one.

But the important effect of this bonus is that once added, it cannot be taken away. As a result, with-profits bonds will generally grow by a small but regular amount each year, no matter what stockmarkets are doing.

This growth is linked to yields from fixed-interest securities, including government gilts. It is also related to an assessment by the life insurance company selling the bond of future investment returns. The reason for this is that the insurer aims to "smooth" investment returns each year, using surpluses built up in good times to pad out poor years. The result is steady, if unexciting, growth year after year.

Although annual bonuses cannot be taken away, they are not hugely generous, barely a few percentage points a year. However, investors in with-profits bonds will generally also receive a further sum, the "terminal bonus", when they decide to cash the bond in.

This terminal bonus, as with a normal with-profits endowment, is virtually impossible to know in advance. Generally, it is linked to overall returns from the investments held in the bond minus any charges and expenses, tax which is deducted within the life company fund, and already-attached bonuses.

Life is not that simple – in practice, the higher the gain, the greater the risk you must accept

What is the performance like? As one might expect from an investment in which just 50 per cent of the fund is directly equity-linked, they are unlikely, over the long-term, to match a traditional unit or investment trust, or the FTSE 100 share index.

But a £10,000 investment made in the average with-profits bond in August 1993 would have grown to £14,466 five years later. This is £2,930 more than the £11,850 paid by a typical 90-day building society account. The top-performing with-profits fund delivered £15,807.

With-profits bonds are generally not as attractive, tax-wise, as PEPs. This is because they are "tax paid" investments – they are subject to a basic rate of tax within the life fund, after deductions for expenses.

Higher-rate taxpayers face an additional liability when they cash in the bond. For non-taxpayers, the fact that they can't reclaim the tax paid on the investment means with-profits bonds are not really suitable for them.

Nevertheless, bonds can still play a useful part in an individual's overall tax planning. This is because, as with any single premium life insurance bond, current tax rules allow investors to take annual "income" from the fund. This can be up to 5 per cent of the original amount invested, for up to 20 years, and is treated as a return of capital. Any tax liability is deferred until the bond is completely encashed.

Of course, if you are a higher-rate taxpayer, it makes sense to wait for a moment when you will be on a lower rate of tax (perhaps after retirement) so that encashment does not involve any additional liability.

Moreover, with-profits bonds also help to sort out a tax "wrinkle" faced by anyone over state retirement age. This is where an additional allowance of £1,215 is added to the normal tax break of £4,195 (plus an extra £190 after 75). Yet any earnings over £16,200 result in the additional allowance being lost at a rate of £1 for every £2 of extra earnings.

However, because the 5 per cent of annual income is not classed as such by the Inland Revenue, this allowance is not lost, delivering a small but significant gain to anyone in that "allowance trap".

Who is the typical with-profits bond investor? Amanda Davidson, a partner at Holden Meehan, London-based independent financial advisers, says: "They are likely to be someone who is relatively risk averse. They do not like to see all their money going directly into equities. They may also have a need for income, coupled with low-risk returns."

She adds that with-profits bonds can be held as part of a balanced portfolio, where an individual's overall investment also consists of normal unit or investment trusts, as well as a building society account.

'The Independent' has produced a free 24-page 'Guide to With-Profits Bonds'. Written by Nic Cicutti, this paper's personal finance editor, the guide examines the arguments for and against investing in bonds. It explains the tax implications, and where to buy a bond. For your copy of the guide, sponsored by The With-Profits Bond Shop, call 0845 2711007

Loose Change

HALIFAX IS launching a campaign aimed at helping customers find the best tax-free savings for their needs. The campaign will include an information pack. Details from branches.

ABN AMRO Fund Managers is offering a 2 per cent discount off investments into its UK Growth and Pan Europe PEPs, available until the end of the tax year on 5 April. Call 0800 0922090.

FIRST ACTIVE is launching a buy-to-let mortgage, Investment Home Loan, with a variable rate of 7.49 per cent for up to 80 per cent of a home's value. Interest on the loan is calculated daily, not annually. Call 0845 6013254.



Internet Investor

Robin Amlôt

A COUPLE of weeks ago I commented on the speed of progress in the virtual world. The business models and methods being used now are almost certain to be overtaken by events in the near future. I can confidently say that after a punishing week of investigative journalism.

My diet and waistline are gradually recovering from lunches on successive days with Interactive Investor, Moneyworld and relative newcomer to the consumer, MoneyeXtra. All three have exciting developments in the pipeline which we will be reviewing for you as they become available in the coming months.

These sites each attempt to cover the full range of personal finance, and may best be described as a cross between a web-based magazine and a financial supermarket. Other sites offer a narrower focus on products, such as the newly launched DiscountPensions website giving comparative quotations, from just three providers at present.

The DiscountPensions service promises to take just 1 per cent commission, with the rest recycled into the policy, to improve the payout on maturity as well as surrender values.

Typical commissions normally payable to intermediaries for single premium personal pension plans are 5 per cent to 6 per cent of the premium. For regular premium plans, the typical commission is 30 to 35 per cent of the premiums for an initial period of up to 27 months. There is also a £25 handling fee. However, as an introductory offer, policies set up before the end of the tax year will be free of commission, with investors paying just the £25 handling fee.

If you like what you see on the site, you can arrange for a full pack of information to be dispatched to you by post, normally the next working day. The pack includes guidance notes on completing an insurance company's application form, and there is a telephone number and an e-mail address for help and advice if required.

DiscountPensions is run by independent consulting actuaries, Geoffrey Bernstein & Co. The website provides no advice. It offers an execution-only service, processing investors' orders. This means that it is not a site for absolute beginners!

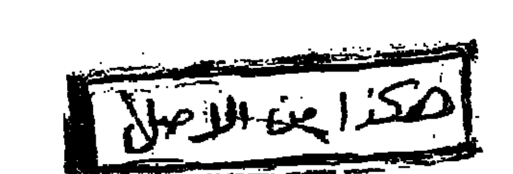
The site's main weakness is the limited choice of pensions, from just three companies: Axa Sun Life, Norwich Union and Standard Life. DiscountPensions says it will add more companies in the future. Nevertheless, despite the current limited choice, the much-reduced commission makes the potential return and the pension fund accumulated, substantially more attractive than purchase through the usual channels.

To return to the financial supermarket concept, a major new player is set to enter the Internet arena. A new holding company has been established, based in Dublin, with initial capital investment of £10.4 million.

The company, enba, intends to offer a variety of Internet-based financial services ventures aimed at investors across Europe, and wants to establish its own electronic banking and brokerage services. Among enba's backers are the venture capital group Apax Partners, and US microchip maker Intel. The group's chairman is Sir Nicholas Redmayne, previously CEO of city brokers Kleinwort Benson. The website is already in place, but enba has not yet launched any of its planned services and is currently recruiting staff.

DiscountPensions: www.discountpensions.co.uk; enba: www.enba.com

Robin can be reached at RobinAmlot@aol.com





BRIAN TORA

Europe remains a collection of nations rather than a homogenous entity

2004: THERE IS a date to conjure with. Write it in your diary. It promises to be an eventful year in the UK. According to Prime Minister Tony Blair, 2004 is the first year in which we might reasonably be expected to join the Single European Currency.

There are a lot of hurdles to cross before we sign up to the euro, but the coded message is that we *are* going in. However the referendum is worded, it sounds as though it will be *begging the answer yes* to linking the pound to the currency of our continental cousins. For all I know, "our Tone" is right. But it does strike me that two months is not a very long time in which to make a judgement.

Most predicted that the euro would become a true reserve currency, offering strength and stability and maybe even sitting alongside the dollar as a fortress of rectitude in an uncertain financial world. It may achieve that status, but it weakened against sterling and the dollar after its introduction.

I know you could put it the other way round and say that America and Britain have strong currencies, but it only goes to show that you should not believe financial forecasters.

The investment case for Europe is undeniably strong. More people live in the European Union than in the USA, yet the combined stockmarket value of member states (excluding the UK) is less than one-third of the US. Europe is hardly poor, but total GDP trails that of the US, which demonstrates that Europe remains a collection of nations, not a homogenous entity.

One of the most compelling arguments for investing in Europe is the case for rationalisation. I am not talking about just the type of M&A activity characterised by Olivetti's audacious bid for Italia Telecom. There is still enormous scope for European industry to consolidate and build businesses capable of competing with the best that America can produce.

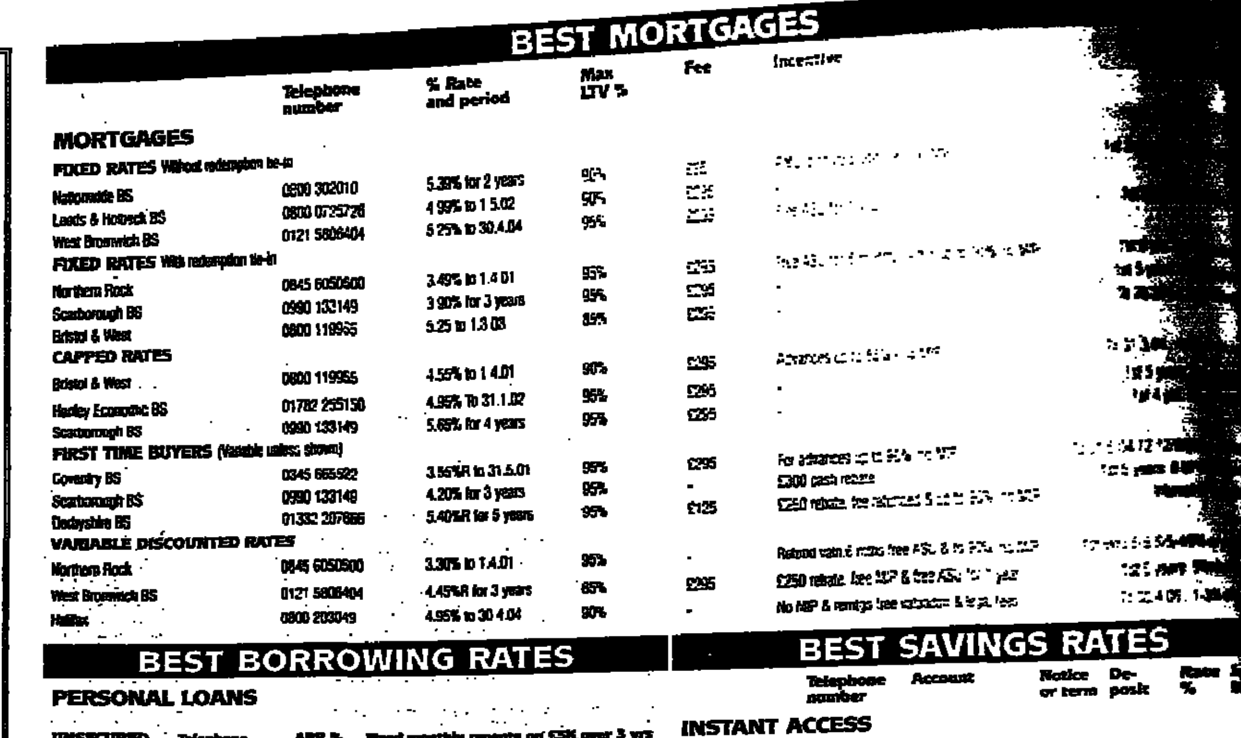
To some extent this is already happening. European drugs companies are world class, for example. But there are 50 tractor manufacturers throughout Europe. In the US, there are four! The same is true elsewhere. Forty battery manufacturers in Europe, five in the US; 10 turbine makers this side of the Atlantic, two the other. So expect the ingredients for a sustained bull market.

Provided the economies hold together, of course. The Chairman of the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, is worried that European governments are not doing enough to stimulate economic activity. Perhaps we need to look at America and realise they have got something very right over recent years.

One final tip. I have not been a fan of trackers – index-matching funds that are cheap to run and pull in a great deal of money. Yet there is a body of opinion that says our own FTSE 100 index may not survive outside the wider context of an index of top European companies.

In any case, it seems inevitable that there will be a flow of money into funds that invest in Europe's largest companies. A true European tracker should do well. Until someone invents a better type of mousetrap, that is.

Brian Tora is chairman of the Greig Middleton investment strategy committee



BEST MORTGAGES

	Telephone number	% Rate and period	Max LTV %	Fee	Incentive
MORTGAGES					
FIXED RATES Without redemption tie-in					
Nationwide BS	0800 302010	5.39% for 2 years	90%	[illegible]	[illegible]
Leeds & Holbeck BS	0800 0725726	4.99% to 1.5.02	90%	[illegible]	-
West Bromwich BS	0121 5808404	5.25% to 30.4.04	95%	[illegible]	[illegible]
FIXED RATES With redemption tie-in					
Northern Rock	0845 6050500	3.49% to 1.4.01	95%	[illegible]	[illegible]
Scarborough BS	0990 133149	3.90% for 3 years	95%	£295	-
Bristol & West	0800 119955	5.25 to 1.3.03	85%	[illegible]	-
CAPPED RATES					
Bristol & West	0800 119955	4.55% to 1.4.01	90%	£295	[illegible]
Hanley Economic BS	01782 255150	4.95% To 31.1.02	95%	£295	-
Scarborough BS	0990 133149	5.65% for 4 years	95%	£255	-
FIRST TIME BUYERS (Variable unless shown)					
Coventry BS	0345 665522	3.55%R to 31.5.01	95%	£295	For advances up to 95% no MIP
Scarborough BS	0990 133149	4.20% for 3 years	95%	-	£300 cash rebate
Derbyshire BS	01332 207666	5.40%R for 5 years	95%	£125	£250 rebate, fee refunded [illegible]
VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES					
Northern Rock	0845 6050500	3.30% to 1.4.01	95%	-	Refund val'n & [illegible] free ASU & [illegible]
West Bromwich BS	0121 5808404	4.45%R for 3 years	85%	£295	£250 rebate, free MIP & free ASU [illegible] year
Halifax	0800 203049	4.95% to 30.4.04	90%	-	No MIP & remtgs free valuation & legal fees

BEST BORROWING RATES

PERSONAL LOANS

UNSECURED	Telephone	APR %	Fixed monthly payments on £5K over 3 yrs: With insurance	Without insurance
Northern Rock	0345 421421	9.3% H	£181.57	£164.19
Phone A Loan	0800 1388889	11.9%	£183.40	£164.81
Direct Line	0181 680 9966	12.2%D	£182.34	£165.22

OVERDRAFTS

	Telephone	Account	Authorised % pm	Authorised APR	Unauthorised % pm	Unauthorised APR
Alliance & Leicester	0500 959595	Alliance	0.95%	12.08%	2.20%	29.8%
Nationwide BS	0500 302010	Flexaccount	0.97%	12.20%	2.10%	28.3%
Abbey National	0800 7317774	Bank	1.09%	13.90%	2.28%	31.1%

CREDIT CARDS

	Telephone	Card Type	Rate % pm	APR %	Annual Fee	Int.free period	Min Income
Co-operative Bank	0800 126000	Advantage Visa	0.48%N	5.90%N	Nil	0 days	
People'sBankConnecticut	0500 551055	Mastercard/Visa	0.56%N	6.90%N	Nil	56 days	
RBS Advanta	0800 077770	Visa	0.565%N	6.90%N	Nil	56 days	
GOLD CARDS							
Co-operative Bank	0800 404070	Base Rate Visa	0.4583%	10.04%	£120	46 days	£20K
Co-operative Bank	0800 126000	Adv Gold Visa	0.48%N	5.90%N	Nil	0 days	£20K
People'sBankConnecticut	0500 551055	Mastercard/Visa	0.56%N	6.90%N	Nil	56days	£20K

STORE CARDS

	Telephone	Payment by direct debit: % pm	% APR	Payment by other methods: % pm	APR
John Lewis	Via store	1.39%	18.0%	1.39%	18.0%
Marks & Spencer	01244 681681	1.93%	25.7%	1.99%	26.7 %
Bhs	Via store	1.95%	26.0%	2.15%	29.0%

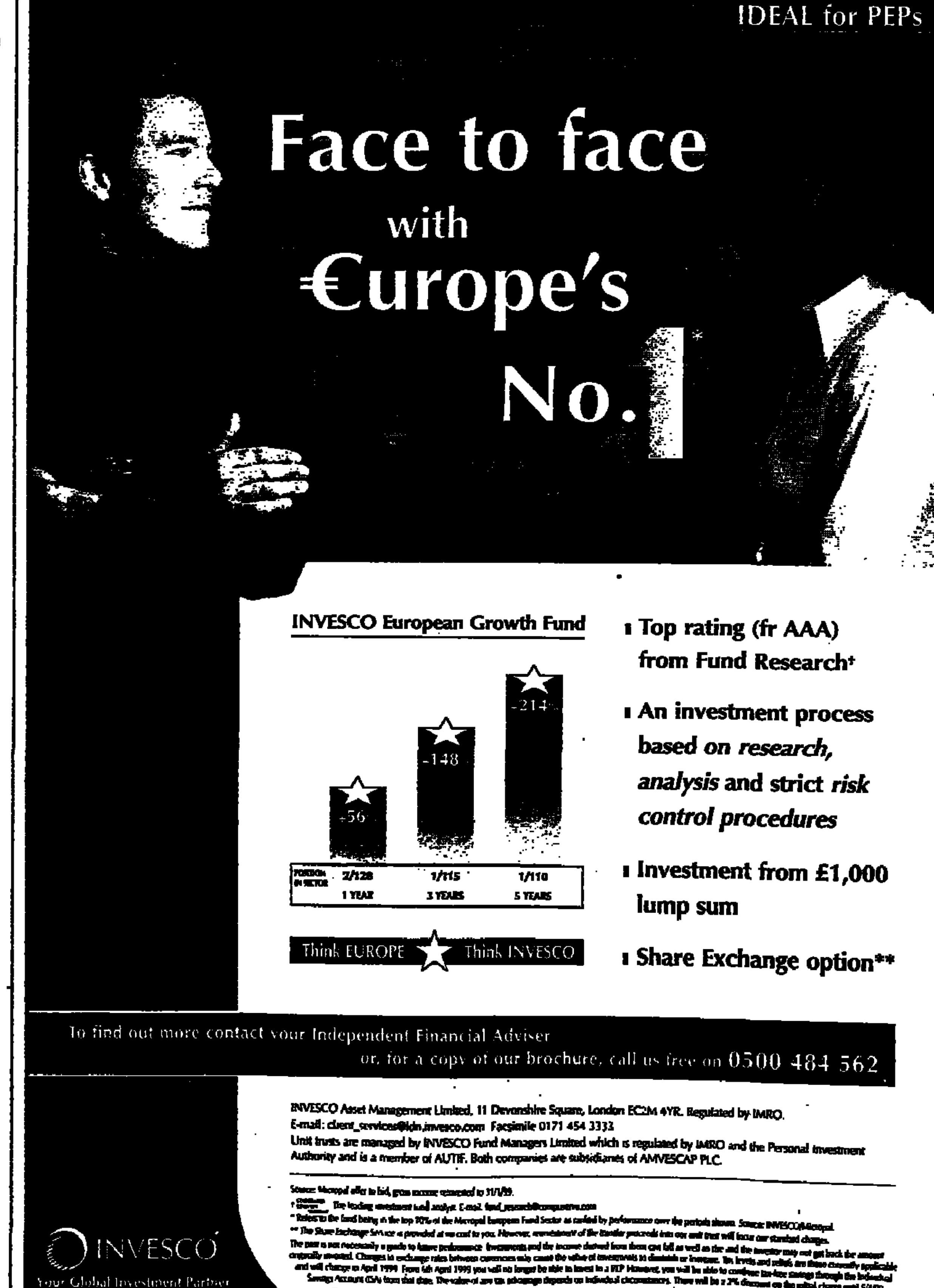
A – Minimum age 22 yrs. Holders of comprehensive motor insurance policy or lender's existing customers
APR – Annualised percentage rate
ASU – Accident, sickness and unemployment insurance
B+C – Buildings and contents insurance
H – Higher rate applies if insurance not arranged
LTV – Loan to value
MIP – Mortgage indemnity premium
N – Introductory rate for a limited period
U – Unemployment insurance
B – Withdrawals via Bank Clearing System
F – Fixed rate (all other rates variable)
N – Net rate
P – By post only

All rates are shown gross and are subject to change without notice.
Source: MONEYFACTS (01603 476476)

* If completion is before 30.4.98
All rates subject to change without notice.
Source: MONEYFACTS (01603 476476) 25 February 1999

BEST SAVINGS RATES

	Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Int. paid
INSTANT ACCESS						
Tesco	0845 7104010	Tesco Savings	Instant	£1	[illegible]	[illegible]
Woolwich	0800 222200	Card Saver	Instant	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Teachers' BS	01202 843550	Bullion	Instant	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Halifax	01422 333333	Instant Saver	Instant	[illegible]	[illegible]	Year
NO NOTICE POSTAL ACCOUNTS						
Egg	0845 6060292	Savings	Post/Phone	£1	6.00%	Year
Standard Life	0345 555657	Direct Access	Telephone	£1	5.85%	Year
Sun Bank	01438 744500	Direct Postal	Postal	£500	5.80%	Year
Safeway	0800 995995	Direct Savings	Post/Phone	£1,000	5.70%	Year
NOTICE ACCOUNTS & BONDS						
Dunfermline BS	01383 627727	Dunfermline Direct	28 Day (P)	£25,000	5.90%	Year
Scarborough BS	01723 500616	40 Day Access	40 Day	£1,000	6.65%	Year
Standard Life Bank	0345 555657	50 Day Access	50 Day (T)	£1	5.95%	Year
Northern Rock	0845 6006767	Save Direct 50	50 Day (B)	£10,000	6.60%	Year
CHEQUE ACCOUNTS						
Sun Bank	01438 744505	HICA	None	£1,000	4.25%	Year
AMC Bank	0181 4472040	HICA	Instant	£5,000	5.25%	Qly
Leeds & Holbeck BS	0800 0728738	Albion Cheque	Instant	£5,000	5.00%	Year
Chelsea BS	0800 429429	Classic Postal	Instant	£10,000	4.25%	Year
FIXED RATE BONDS						
Bristol & West	0117 9792222	Double Guarantee	18.8.99	£5,000	5.55% F	Year
Investec Bank (UK)	0171 2031650	Year Bond	1 Year	£2,001	5.50% F	Maturity
First Active	0845 6013572	Guaranteed Windfall	2 Year	£1,000	6.00% F	Year
Hinckley & Rugby BS	0800 774499	Fixed Rate Bond	5 Year	£5,000	5.75% F	Year
FIRST TESSAS						
Skipton BS	0345 171777		5 Year	£3,000	7.40%	Year
Lambeth BS	0800 225221		5 Year	£3,000	6.95%	Year
Yorkshire BS	0800 378836		5 Year	£100	6.85%	Year
Julian Hodge Bank	01222 220800		5 Year	£250	6.75%	Year
FOLLOW-ON TESSAS						
Barclays Bank	0800 400100		5 Year	£9,000	7.00%	Year
Lambeth BS	0800 225221		5 Year	£9,000	6.95%	Year
Yorkshire BS	0800 378836		5 Year	£9,000	6.95%	Year
Mansfield BS	0800 400100		5 Year	£500	6.750%	Year
GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS (net)						
GE Financial	0181 3803388		1 Year	£20,000	4.15% FN	Year
GE Financial	0181 3803388		2 Year	£10,000	3.90% FN	Year
Countrywide Assured	0800 838020		3 Year	£10,000	4.00% FN	Year
Pinnacle Insurance	0181 2079007		4 Year	£10,000	4.30% FN	Year
Countrywide Assured	0800 838020		5 Year	£10,000	4.10% FN	Year
OFFSHORE ACCOUNTS (gross)						
Cheshire Guernsey	01481 726885	Instant Offshore	None	£5,000	[illegible]	Year
Cheshire Guernsey	0141 726885	Offshore 60	60 Day	£10,000	6.60%	Year
Northern Rock G'nsey	01481 714600	Offshore 90	90 Day	£10,000	[illegible]	Year
Alliance & Leicester	01624 663566	Notice 180	180 Day	£50,000	7.15%	Year



Bring all your debts to account

If you like to keep things simple where finances are concerned, a flexible mortgage account could be for you. But look carefully at the options on offer to make sure you get the best deal. By **Iain Morse**

Think of the many types of financial arrangements we might have to make in the course of our lives – a mortgage, an overdraft facility, a deposit account, a personal loan and a credit card. The chances are that most of us will be dealing with at least two or more providers in relation to these products.

The problem with this way of doing things is not only that it is an exceedingly cumbersome way to sort out one's financial arrangements. Borrowers can also end up paying through the nose for credit.

Few lenders charge less than 15 per cent interest on authorised overdrafts, and most cap the amount they will lend in this way at an amount equivalent to one months' take home pay. If you go over the authorised limit, all lenders impose punitive rates of interest, typically of around 30 per cent.

Unsecured personal loans are also expensive and carry stiff penalties for early redemption. Examples include the Royal Bank of Scotland, charging a hefty 28.2 per cent APR on a loan of £500 to £1,450, with an penalty of 2 months interest for early redemption of the loan.

Flexible mortgages offer an alternative, low-cost route to borrowing by consolidating your debts into one account, secured on the value of your home. The maximum you can borrow will be set as a percentage of its market value.

This allows you to borrow at the standard variable mortgage rate charged by a flexible mortgage provider. These rates range from just 6.69 per cent, charged by Tipton & Coseley, to a variety of variable rates from First Active, ranging between 7.24 per cent and 8.24 per cent, depending on the loan-to-value, or LTV. This makes Tipton look the better deal, but examining the fine print of each loan shows up some important differences.

For instance, Tipton will lend no more than 75 per cent of LTVs, while First Active go up to 95 per cent. Both will allow overpayments, but only First Active allows underpayments. Tipton allows you to withdraw a minimum of £1,000 just three times a year. Meanwhile, First Active offers a full banking service, including cheque book, card, and credit card with no minimum limit on withdrawals.

This shows that some flexible mortgages stretch further than others. If tempted, set out to make a comparison between flexible loans, and find the one most suited to your individual circumstances.

Flexible mortgages offer an alternative low-cost route to borrowing

The attraction of some flexible home loans is that they also allow borrowers to operate a mortgage like a bank account. This type of arrangement is proving to be increasingly popular.

Mark Cohen, 38, works in the City and writes part-time. Being a writer is no easy matter. There is the creative tension involved in crafting the perfect novel. Then comes the problem of how to plan one's financial affairs so that sums of money coming in irregularly can be used to meet regular outgoings, such as monthly mortgage payments.

Mr Cohen believes he has found the answer to this problem. Last year he opened a flexible mortgage bank account into which he pays his salary from his main job with a leading city firm. He also paid in the advance he received from his first novel, *Brass Monkeys*, a tale of political intrigue now out in paperback.

Mr Cohen, who lives in London, says: "It has been a tremendously useful exercise. Not only am I paying off my mortgage far faster than would normally be the case, the advance on my novel has helped me reduce my debt still further. While it is there I am effectively earning a far higher rate of interest, after tax, than any other commonly available type of deposit account. But if I should ever need any of that money, it is still available to use."

Since opening the account he has used it as a normal account. "I write cheques and use ATMs, and control all my finances from it. I have never found a problem using my cheque card – there are so many different types of card nowadays."

There are three current account mortgage providers, where cheques, cash cards and, in some cases, credit cards are available to customers as part of an all-in-one package: First Active, Kleinwort Benson and Virgin Direct's One Account. Virgin Direct offers rates ranging between 6.6 per cent on LTVs of 50 per cent or less, and 7.45 per cent for loans of up to 95 per cent of a home's value. Kleinwort Benson's rate is 6.45 per cent on a maximum LTV of 80 per cent.

Kleinwort Benson: 0800 317477; First Active Financial: 0345 743743; Virgin One: 08456 000001

■ *'The Independent' is offering a free 36-page 'Guide to Flexible Mortgages', with tips on all aspects of home loans, including how much you can borrow, how to repay the mortgage and a list of useful names and telephone numbers. For your copy of the guide, sponsored by First Active, call 0800 550551*

For your final PEP choice...

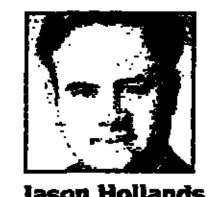
The best advice on corporate bond and income funds. By **Tony Lyons**


Roddy Kohn


Graham Bates


David Thomson


Paul Penny


Jason Hollands

MOST OF the fund managers with the leading investment groups highlight Europe as the main sector for growth investors. If income is the aim, or you are nervous about the stock market's current volatile condition and the direction share prices are heading, they recommend either corporate bond or high income funds.

There are hundreds of funds to choose from in these sectors. More new corporate bond and high income funds are being launched – in the past couple of weeks we have seen Fidelity, Perpetual and Societe Generale, among others, promoting new funds in these sectors – to attract last-minute PEP investors before PEPs end.

To help you make a choice, *The Independent* spoke to a number of leading independent financial advisers about the funds they would recommend for your final PEP.

Among the 130 or so unit and investment trusts specialising in Europe, the IFAs all highlighted the funds run by Fidelity, Gartmore, Invesco, Newton, Scottish Widows and Jupiter. These have all had outstanding performance records

According to Graham Bates of Bates Investment Services: "The European message will continue for some time. Only five funds that were in the top 30 PEP performers for the five years up to the end of 1993 were still in the top 30 for the five years to the end of 1998.

"These included Fidelity European Opportunities, and the European funds run by Lazards, Royal & SunAlliance, and Scottish Widows – the other consistent performer was Jupiter Income. I particularly like the Fidelity fund, as it invests in leading blue chip European companies rather than the higher-risk small and medium sized ones."

Although not a qualifying fund, and therefore subject to the £1,500 limit on PEP investment, Kim North of Pretty Financial recommends the Societe Generale Technology fund for the long-term growth investor who does not mind taking a higher than average risk.

While less than a year old, the fund is run by Alan Torry, who had outstanding success when running the technology fund of Aberdeen Prolific, one of the leading long-term performers. "The new technology battleground, while it has risks, still presents some exciting investment opportunities over the long term, and the manager of this fund has proved that he can make the right stock selection," says Ms North.

'The new technology battleground, while it has risks, still presents some exciting investment opportunities in the long term'

If you are a first time PEP investor, or someone wanting a low-risk UK investment, then a tracker fund could be the answer. "I would favour either the Legal & General or the Scottish Widows fund," says Paul Penny of Financial Discounts Direct. These are low-charging funds, which can be bought from discount brokers such as his firm, reducing the cost even more. You could also look at other funds, such as Virgin and Marks & Spencer, that have shown good performance when compared against actively-managed UK growth funds.

Among the UK growth funds, David Tomson of Aitchison & Colegrave recommends Old Mutual UK Growth: "It is going through a purple patch. Valued at some £200m, it is slightly smaller than most funds run by the larger groups, and it has performed well by investing in telecom and pharmaceutical companies, as well as the blue chips."

Graham Bates gives his recommendation: "Save & Prosper Premier Equity Growth – a consistently good performer run by a manager with a proven stock-picking record, and Fidelity UK Growth, a solid, well-run fund."

When it comes to income, IFAs are split between those who prefer corporate bond funds and those who like the total-return approach of income funds. With a corporate bond that invests largely in company loan stock, the starting yield of 6 per cent or more is very attractive. But, as rule, the underlying investments do not rise and fall in the way equities do.

So while they offer a good deal of protection against falls in the stock market, they only offer limited growth potential. Income funds, on the other hand, tend to invest in the ordinary shares of leading companies such as BT and BP, that offer the prospect of rising income over time, as well as capital growth in the price of their shares.

Among the conventional corporate bonds, not those investing in the more risky, almost junk bond sector, the IFAs recommend the funds offered by CGU, which pays a monthly income, and M&G, both of which have good, consistent performance records.

"Corporate bond funds are ideal for someone who wants to maximise income, but equity income funds make a lot of sense if investors want a mix of growth and rising income," says Jason Hollands of BESt Investment. Among the funds he highly recommends are Newton Income and BWD Equity & Fixed Income.

To these, other IFAs add Jupiter Income, Perpetual High Income, Premier Dividend Fund and Save & Prosper Premier Equity Income. "The latter, like its sister growth fund, has shown steady, consistent performance," says Graham Bates. "But most importantly, the manager has an obsessive approach to stock avoidance, meaning not buying into the wrong companies."

As an alternative course of action for investors averse to taking any high risks, Roddy Kohn of Kohn Cougar, suggests investors could look at the HSBC Capital Protected Income PEP. With a listing on the Dublin Stock Exchange, this has the added advantage of also offering a single company PEP for anyone who wants to make use of their full PEP allowances.

With a target yield of 7.25 per cent, it also guarantees a full return of income after five years. It invests three quarters of its money with leading high street names such the Halifax, which will return the guaranteed amount at the end of the fifth year. The rest it invests in various derivatives to generate the high income.



BRIAN TORA

Europe remains a collection of nations rather than a homogenous entity

2004: THERE IS a date to conjure with. Write it in your diary. It promises to be an eventful year in the UK. According to Prime Minister Tony Blair, 2004 is the first year in which we might reasonably be expected to join the Single European Currency.

There are a lot of hurdles to cross before we sign up to the euro, but the coded message is that we *are* going in. However the referendum is worded, it sounds as though it will be begging the answer yes to linking the pound to the currency of our continental cousins. For all I know, "our Tone" is right. But it does strike me that two months is not a very long time in which to make a judgement.

Most predicted that the euro would become a true reserve currency, offering strength and stability and maybe even sitting alongside the dollar as a fortress of rectitude in an uncertain financial world. It may achieve that status, but it weakened against sterling and the dollar after its introduction.

I know you could put it the other way round and say that America and Britain have strong currencies, but it only goes to show that you should not believe financial forecasters.

The investment case for Europe is undeniably strong. More people live in the European Union than in the USA, yet the combined stockmarket value of member states (excluding the UK) is less than one-third of the US. Europe is hardly poor, but total GDP trails that of the US, which demonstrates that Europe remains a collection of nations, not a homogenous entity.

One of the most compelling arguments for investing in Europe is the case for rationalisation. I am not talking about just the type of M&A activity characterised by Olivetti's audacious bid for Italia Telecom. There is still enormous scope for European industry to consolidate and build businesses capable of competing with the best that America can produce.

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Provided the economies hold together, of course. The Chairman of the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, is worried that European governments are not doing enough to stimulate economic activity. Perhaps we need to look at America and realise they have got something very right over recent years.

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Brian Tora is chairman of the Greig Middleton investment strategy committee

BEST MORTGAGES

MORTGAGES

	Telephone number	% Rate and period	Max LTV %	Fee	Incentive	Redemption Penalty
FIXED RATES Without redemption tie-in						
Nationwide BS	0800 302010	5.39% for 2 years	90%	£95	Refund of valuation fee - no MIP	1st 2 years : 4/3 months interest
Leeds & Holbeck BS	0800 0726726	4.99% to 1.5.02	90%	£295		None
West Bromwich BS	0121 5806404	5.25% to 30.4.04	95%	£295	Free ASU for 1 year	1st 5 years:5% of sum repaid
FIXED RATES With redemption tie-in						
Northern Rock	0845 6050500	3.49% to 1.4.01	95%	£295	Free ASU for 6 months Advs up to 90%-no MIP	1st 6 yrs: 3-6% of sum repaid
Scarborough BS	0990 133149	3.90% for 3 years	95%	£295		1st 5 years : 5% of sum repaid
Bristol & West	0800 119955	5.25 to 1.3.03	85%	£295		To 28.2.04:4.5% of sum repaid
CAPPED RATES						
Bristol & West	0800 119955	4.55% to 1.4.01	90%	£295	Advances up to 85% - no MIP	To 31.3.04 : 4.5% of sum repaid
Hanley Economic BS	01782 255150	4.95% To 31.1.02	95%	£295		1st 5 years:120 days interest
Scarborough BS	0990 133149	5.65% for 4 years	95%	£295		1st 4 yrs: 5% of sum repaid
FIRST TIME BUYERS (Variable unless shown)						
Coventry BS	0345 665522	3.55%R to 31.5.01	95%	£295	For advances up to 90%, no MIP	To 31.5.04 12/12/6/6/6 mnths interest
Scarborough BS	0990 133149	4.20% for 3 years	95%	-	£300 cash rebate	1st 5 years: 8.07% of sum repaid
Derbyshire BS	01332 207688	5.40%R for 5 years	95%	£125	£250 rebate; fee refunded & up to 90%, no MIP	Interest to end of month
VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES						
Northern Rock	0845 6050500	3.30% to 1.4.01	95%	-	Refund valn,6 mths free ASU & to 90%, no MIP	1st 6yrs 5/5/5/5/4/3% of sum repaid
West Bromwich BS	0121 5806404	4.45%R for 3 years	85%	£295	£250 rebate, free MIP & free ASU for 1 year	1st 5 years: 5% of sum repaid
Halifax	0800 203049	4.95% to 30.4.04	80%	-	No MIP & mortgage free valuation & legal fees	To 30.4.05 : 1-3% of advance

BEST BORROWING RATES

PERSONAL LOANS

UNSECURED	Telephone	APR %	Fixed monthly payments on £5K over 3 yrs: With Insurance	Without Insurance
Northern Rock	0345 421421	9.3% H	£181.67	£164.18
Phone A Loan	0800 1388999	11.9%	£183.40	£164.81
Direct Line	0181 680 9966	12.9%D	£182.34	£165.22

OVERDRAFTS

	Telephone	Account	Authorised % pm	Authorised APR	Unauthorised % pm	Unauthorised APR
Alliance & Leicester	0500 959595	Alliance	0.95%	12.00%	2.20%	29.8%
Nationwide BS	0500 302010	Flexaccount	0.97%	12.20%	2.10%	28.3%
Abbey National	0800 7317774	Bank	1.09%	13.90%	2.28%	31.1%

CREDIT CARDS

	Telephone	Card Type	Rate % pm	APR %	Annual Fee	Int-free period	Min. Income
Co-operative Bank	0800 126000	Advantage Visa	0.48%N	5.90%N	Nil	0 days	
People'sBankConnecticut	0500 551055	Mastercard/Visa	0.58%N	6.90%N	Nil	56 days	
RBS Advanta	0800 077770	Visa	0.585%N	6.90%N	Nil	56 days	
GOLD CARDS							
Co-operative Bank	0800 404070	Base Rate Visa	0.4583%	10.04%	£120	46 days	£20K
Co-operative Bank	0800 126000	Adv Gold Visa	0.48%N	5.90%N	Nil	0 days	£20K
People'sBankConnecticut	0500 551055	Mastercard/Visa	0.56%N	6.90%N	Nil	56days	£20K

STORE CARDS

	Telephone	Payment by direct debit: % pm	% APR	Payment by other methods: % pm	APR
John Lewis	Via store	1.39%	18.0%	1.39%	18.0%
Marks & Spencer	01244 681681	1.93%	25.7%	1.99%	26.7 %
Bhs	Via store	1.95%	26.0%	2.15%	29.0%

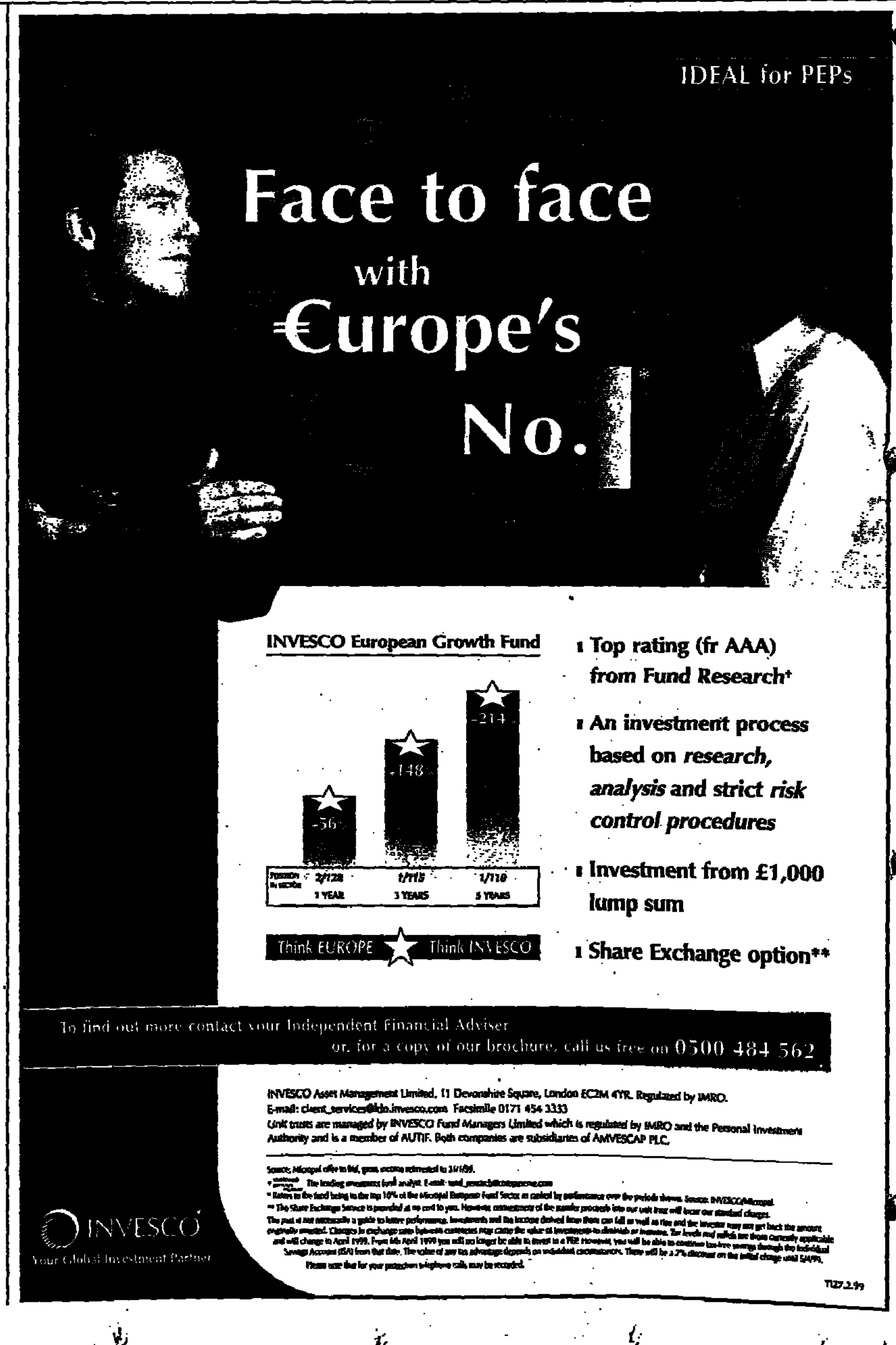
A – Minimum age 22 yrs. Holders of comprehensive motor insurance policy or lender's existing customers
APR – Annualised percentage rate
ASU – Accident, sickness and unemployment insurance
B+C – Buildings and contents insurance
H – Higher rate applies if insurance not arranged
LTV – Loan to value
MIP – Mortgage indemnity premium
R – Introductory rate for a limited period
U – Unemployment insurance
B – Withdrawals via Bank Clearing System
F – Fixed rate (all other rates variable)
N – Net rate
P – By post only

All rates are shown gross and are subject to change without notice.
Source: MONEYFACTS (01603 476476)

* If completion is before 30.4.98
All rates subject to change without notice.
Source: MONEYFACTS (01603 476476) 25 February 1999

BEST SAVINGS RATES

	Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest Interval
INSTANT ACCESS						
Tesco	0845 7104010	Tesco Savings	Instant	£1	4.50%	Year
Woolwich	0800 222200	Card Saver	Instant	£50	4.75%	Year
Teachers' BS	01202 843550	Bullion	Instant	£500	4.30%	1/2 Year
Halifax	01422 333333	Instant Saver	Instant	£500	4.75%	Year
NO NOTICE POSTAL ACCOUNTS						
Egg	0845 6000292	Savings	Post/Phone	£1	6.00%	Year
Standard Life	0345 555657	Direct Access	Telephone	£1	5.85%	Year
Sun Bank	01438 744500	Direct Postal	Postal	£500	5.60%	Year
Safeway	0800 995995	Direct Savings	Post/Phone	£1,000	5.70%	Year
NOTICE ACCOUNTS & BONDS						
Dunfermline BS	01383 627727	Dunfermline Direct	28 Day (P)	£25,000	5.90%	Year
Scarborough BS	01723 500616	40 Day Access	40 Day	£1,000	6.65%	Year
Standard Life Bank	0345 555657	50 Day Access	50 Day (T)	£1	5.95%	Year
Northern Rock	0845 6006762	Save Direct 50	50 Day (B)	£10,000	6.60%	Year
CHEQUE ACCOUNTS						
Sun Bank	01438 744505	HICA	None	£1,000	4.25%	Year
AMC Bank	0181 4472040	HICA	Instant	£5,000	5.25%	Qly
Leeds & Holbeck BS	0800 0726726	Albion Cheque	Instant	£5,000	5.00%	Year
Chelsea BS	0800 428429	Classic Postal	Instant	£10,000	4.25%	Year
FIXED RATE BONDS						
Bristol & West	0117 9792222	Double Guarantee	18.8.99	£5,000	5.55% F	Year
Investec Bank (UK)	0171 2031850	Year Bond	1 Year	£2,001	5.58% F	Maturity
First Active	0845 6013972	Guaranteed Windfall	2 Year	£1,000	6.00% F	Year
Hinckley & Rugby BS	0800 774499	Fixed Rate Bond	5 Year	£5,000	5.75% F	Year
FIRST TESSAS						
Skipton BS	0345 171777		5 Year	£3,000	7.40%	Year
Lambeth BS	0800 225221		5 Year	£3,000	6.95%	Year
Yorkshire BS	0800 378836		5 Year	£100	6.85%	Year
Julian Hodge Bank	01222 220800		5 Year	£250	6.75%	Year
FOLLOW-ON TESSAS						
Barclays Bank	0800 400100		5 Year	£9,000	7.00%	Year
Lambeth BS	0800 225221		5 Year	£9,000	6.95%	Year
Yorkshire BS	0800 378836		5 Year	£9,000	6.95%	Year
Mansfield BS	0800 400100		5 Year	£500	6.750%	Year
GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS (net)						
GE Financial	0181 3803388		1 Year	£20,000	4.15% FN	Year
GE Financial	0181 3803388		2 Year	£10,000	3.90% FN	Year
Countrywide Assured	0800 838820		3 Year	£10,000	4.00% FN	Year
Pinnacle Insurance	0181 2079007		4 Year	£10,000	4.30% FN	Year
Countrywide Assured	0800 838020		5 Year	£10,000	4.10% FN	Year
OFFSHORE ACCOUNTS (gross)						
Cheshire Guernsey	01481 726885	Mutual Offshore	None	£5,000	6.20%	Year
Cheshire Guernsey	0141 726885	Offshore 60	60 Day	£10,000	6.60%	Year
Northern Rock G'nsey	01481 714600	Offshore 90	90 Day	£10,000	6.95%	Year
Alliance & Leicester	01624 663566	Notice 180	180 Day	£50,000	7.15%	Year







Pick up the direct line

Direct banking services are proving ever more popular – and no wonder, says Tony Lyons

ALL THE main banks now offer their customers telephone banking, ranging from the most basic to a fully comprehensive service. By the end of this year, according to Datamonitor, a management consultancy and research group, around a third of the UK population with bank accounts will be using the phone to do some of its banking.

This revolution started a decade ago when First Direct, a division of Midland Bank, became the first telephone-only banking service. Open 24 hours a day, every day of the year, it quickly caught on, and today has nearly 1 million customers.

It appealed to all those who were fed up with the high street banks, that were then only open until 3pm, and frustrated with having to face long queues at their branch.

With all the telephone banking services you can pay bills, so long as the destination has been pre-arranged, check balances and recent transactions, order cheque books and statements. And a couple, including Citibank, allow you to run your account over the Internet. Most telephone banking is either free or costs the local phone call rate.

Before being able to use a telephone bank, you will have to register to use its services. If this is an offshoot of your high street bank, this is easy to arrange. Just ask next time you visit the branch.

However, if you want to move your account completely, most of the direct providers will give you a pack that will arrange the transfer. Then, once accepted and registered, all you will have to remember when using the service is the telephone number and your code word or pin number that will identify you.

It is the new entrants on the scene, including supermarket banking subsidiaries, life assurers and former building societies, that are causing the biggest stir in direct banking circles. You will find that they will offer better interest rates on your credit balances, something still rare with high street current accounts, and lower cost overdrafts than the conventional banks.

Take Alliance & Leicester, a fairly typical example, where the annual cost of an authorised £200 overdraft, enough to cover most of us who dip into the red at the end of the month as we wait to be paid, would be £24, according to *Moneyfacts*, a personal finance magazine, compared with a charge of at least £95 with most of the high street banks.

And it pays interest of 2 per cent a year on credit balances up to £5,000. Not a lot, but compare this with the 0.25 per cent paid on Barclays Cheque Plus and Lloyds Gold or the 0.5 per cent paid on the Midland Meridian and NatWest Advantage Gold.

Some are offering generous interest rates on instant deposit accounts. Among some of the best rates currently on offer are those from Egg, the Prudential's new banking subsidiary, Safeway and Standard Life Bank.

Also, some of them, including Standard Life Bank and Legal & General Bank, have ventured into the new flexible mortgages. These can be used virtually as deposit and current accounts, with lower cost overdraft facilities, as well as a means of paying off a home loan.

They all offer cheque guarantee cards that double as cash withdrawal cards, and sometimes as credit cards. As long as you can remember your pin number, you can use any authorised cash machines.

With their ease of use and availability, no wonder more of us are using telephone banking services.



Visit the bank manager in your front room *Hulton Getty*

Give me a call sometime

Buying a pension over the phone is quick, simple, flexible, and far cheaper than the traditional schemes – and it keeps the glib-talking salesmen away from your door. By Tony Lyons

IT WAS the entrance of Marks & Spencer and Virgin Direct into the market almost three years ago that gave a boost to direct sales of pensions. Almost overnight, thousands of the under-40 generation who had been largely unaware of the need to save for retirement, or were wary of dealing with insurance companies, found that they could deal with untraditional pension providers who they trusted.

Prior to this, the personal pensions that could be bought over the telephone were largely confined to more sophisticated investors. Direct sales had been around since the early Nineties, but in the main the providers were selling plans linked to investment trusts.

Offered by companies such as Merchant Investors and Foreign & Colonial, they only appealed to a small section of the population who understood the sophisticated nature of investment trusts.

The new entrants to direct selling, followed by the likes of Direct Line and Tesco, took a more down-to-earth approach, largely offering plans tied to tracker funds that mirrored the performance of the leading stock market indices. A number of traditional pension providers, such as Eagle Star, Legal & General, and Scottish Widows, seeing the change in the market place, also began to offer similar plans.

The direct sellers are beginning to take an increasing share of the pension market. While less than 4 per cent of the near £70bn contributed to pension plans last year was arranged over the telephone, it is a steadily growing section of the market.

The rules governing personal pensions are the same whether they are bought over the phone, from an independent financial adviser, or through a company salesman.

So long as you have earnings from non-pensionable employment, you can take out a pension plan. And as long as you stay within the rules governing maximum contributions, all your premiums will be eligible for tax relief at your highest rate of tax. This mean that your investments will grow in an almost tax-free environment.

If you do not need any advice (and even if you do, for that matter) buying a pension over the phone is simplicity itself. Most of the providers are available between 8 am and 8 pm every day of the week, on either a freephone or a number that charges the cost of a local call, with Eagle Star even offering a 24-hour service.

You'll find your call will usually be answered within a couple of rings. All you then have to do is tell the operator your name and address, and the details of the schemes will be sent to you within a day or two.

A number of direct providers now offer advice if you need it. Of course, the advice will only be about that company's own pension plan. You'll find that you will be speaking to a fully trained member of staff who will take you through a quick fact-find, usually lasting between 20 and 40 minutes, to ascertain that you are eligible to take out a personal pension, and to find out if the plan will suit your individual needs. After this is done, and assuming that you are eligible, details will be posted.



Phones cut through pension double-talk *Hulton Getty*

In the leisure of your own home, and with no sales pressure, you can then look at what the direct providers offer. You'll find that they offer a number of advantages over traditional personal pensions. To start with, they cost less. You can start a plan from as little as £30 a month with Tesco, but most have a higher starting point.

Charges are clearly laid out and tend to be much lower. This is because there is no need for any expensive office accommodation, just the cost of a call centre usually located in a low-rent part of the country.

Telephone pension providers also argue that they pay no commission to their salesforces. This is hotly disputed by traditional advisers, who argue that the telephone-based companies all pay bonuses of some sort to their staff. But the huge up-front commissions received by typical salesforces are non-existent in a phone pensions environment.

Most of the direct pensions are more flexible. If you want to put in a lump sum, you can. Payments can be usually be changed, even stopped, without penalty. Most will also allow waiver of premium benefit, which will insure that contributions will still be made if you are unable to work for long periods because of accident or ill health – Direct Line offers this free of charge. They all allow for earlier retirement than originally stated, as long as it's after age 50, without penalty.

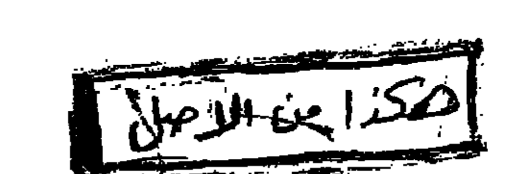
No wonder direct pension providers, with their lower costs and greater flexibility, are expected to take an increasing share of the pension market. It's a wonder that people still take out more expensive, inflexible, pension plans still sold by the majority of traditional pension providers.

Who to contact for a telephone bank account

Alliance & Leicester on 0500 959595; First Direct on 0800 242424; Barclays on 0800 400100; Egg on 0845 6000292; Legal & General on 0500 111200; Lloyds on 0800 147789; Midland on 0800 180180; NatWest on 0800 200400; Citibank on 0800 008800; Safeway on 0800 995995; Standard Life Bank on 0345 555657.

Who to contact for a telephone pension

Virgin Direct on 0345 900900; Marks & Spencer Life Assurance on 0800 363432; Direct Line Life on 0845 300233; Eagle Star Direct on 0800 776666; Legal & General Direct on 0500 909090; Scottish Widows Direct on 0345 678910; Tesco on 0845 8455555; Merchant Investors on 0800 374857; Foreign & Colonial on 0171 454 1415.



Five Questions That You Need To Ask About Term Assurance

- When would the plan pay out and how much will it pay? If your partner also needs life cover, look at joint cover, though single cover is better if you split up or the need for cover is likely to continue if one of you dies.
- Is the premium guaranteed? If not, how often are rates reviewed?
- Can the policy be extended or converted at the end of or during the term? If so, what are the options?
- Is this the cheapest cover in the market? Term assurance is a commodity product – there is little point paying more for a brand name.
- Will the policy be written under trust? This usually costs nothing but means faster payout on death and avoids having to pay Inheritance Tax on the sum assured.

Ensuring that there is money in the pot

In the second of a series of articles on how you can create your own personal welfare state, we look at the savings to be made on life assurance. By **Andy Couchman**

INSURERS DO not always have a reputation for passing on cost savings to their customers, but basic life assurance has become something of a buyers' market in recent times. It now costs less than it did before anyone had heard of Aids in the early Eighties.

In fact, if prices continue falling at their current levels, insurers could, within 15 years, be in the position of paying you to take out a policy. Or so suggests Swiss Re, a company which specialises in sharing risks with insurers, and which regularly monitors trends in term assurance pricing.

That partly reflects the fact that we are now living longer. Figures just released by the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries show that, on average, a man of 30 can expect to live to the age of 79 and three months, almost five-and-a-half years longer than a man of the same age could expect in 1960.

A woman aged 30 will live even longer – to 84 years and four months. Of course, if you are a smoker, the news is not so good. Women smokers on average can expect to live seven years less, male smokers for five-and-a-half years less.

Not everyone needs life assurance. If you have no dependants, you probably have no need for it, though if you borrow money, the lender may insist that you have enough to pay off their loan if you die.

As you get older, moreover, the need for life assurance also largely falls away, unless, that is, your estate exceeds £223,000 and you do not want your beneficiaries to have to cash in investments or sell your home in order to pay any inheritance tax (IHT).

The tax kicks in at £223,000 at a stinging 40 per cent and is payable on your whole estate, including your home and on any assets given away up to seven years before your death.

Many people simply want to ensure that in the event of their death, their partner and any children are well protected financially while they are still financially dependent. The cheapest way to do that is with a term assurance policy.

The reason it is so cheap – a woman aged 30 could pay just £6.12 a month to get £100,000 cover for 15 years, a man of 30, £8.18 a month – is that it only pays out if you die during the policy term. As you are unlikely to die until well into retirement, the policy is likely to expire before you do.

The flip side is that if you do not die before the term, neither you nor your estate gets anything back. To help improve those odds, you could instead have a renewable policy. This usually lasts for 10 years and at the end of the term you effectively start again. As you are older it will cost more then, and a little more initially too, as the life company could be taking on a much longer-term risk.

A convertible policy allows you to convert to another type of policy, usually a whole of life policy which, as its name suggests, lasts just as long as you do. You can also have a policy that is both renewable and convertible.

Basic term, renewable term or convertible term are likely to have a fixed sum assured or one that goes up each year, usually in line with average prices or earnings. The earnings link is best, as earnings tend to outstrip prices over the long run.

If you are looking to reduce costs and your need for life assurance is likely to fall away over the years, you could look at a policy where the sum assured goes down each year.

That is not as strange as it sounds. If you are buying a house or flat and have a repayment mortgage, for example, the amount owed will fall each year as you slowly repay the capital borrowed. A mortgage protection policy is designed to go down by a roughly similar amount so that you do not have to pay for more cover than you need.

Family income benefit plans takes a different approach. Instead of paying a single large lump sum on your death, this pays a smaller amount every year until the end of the term. A policy paying £10,000 a year for 20 years could pay out £200,000 if you died in the first year but it would cost considerably less than a policy with a level £200,000 sum assured.

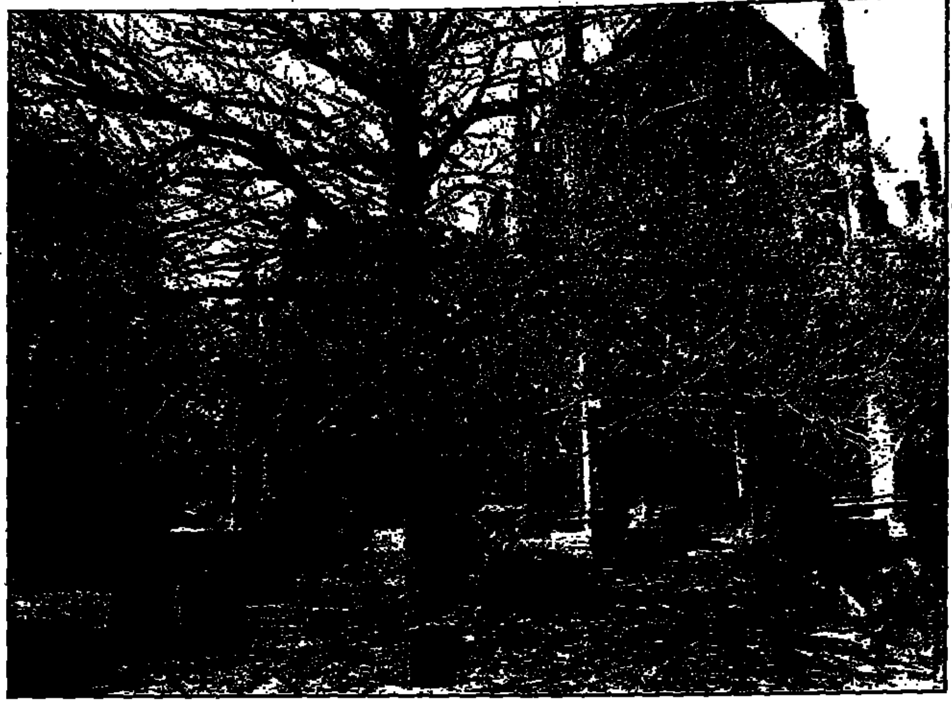
However, if you died after, say, 18 years, it would only pay out two payments of £10,000. This type of plan is most useful if you have young children who are likely to be financially dependent on you until they start work.

The final consideration when deciding which type of term assurance is best for you is whether you want guaranteed rates or reviewable rates. On a reviewable policy, the life company will periodically – usually every five years or so – compare its actual experience with the assumptions it made at the start.

If we go on living longer, you could find that at review you are offered more cover or a lower premium. If it goes the other way and life expectancy goes down – perhaps because of another Aids-type epidemic for example – then you could find yourself having to pay more.

If you want to play safe, go for guaranteed rates. Whatever you decide is right for you, it pays to shop around, or to get an independent financial adviser to do so for you.

For a list of financial advisers near you, call IFA Promotion on 0117 971 1177. Andy Couchman is publishing editor of HealthCare Insurance Report

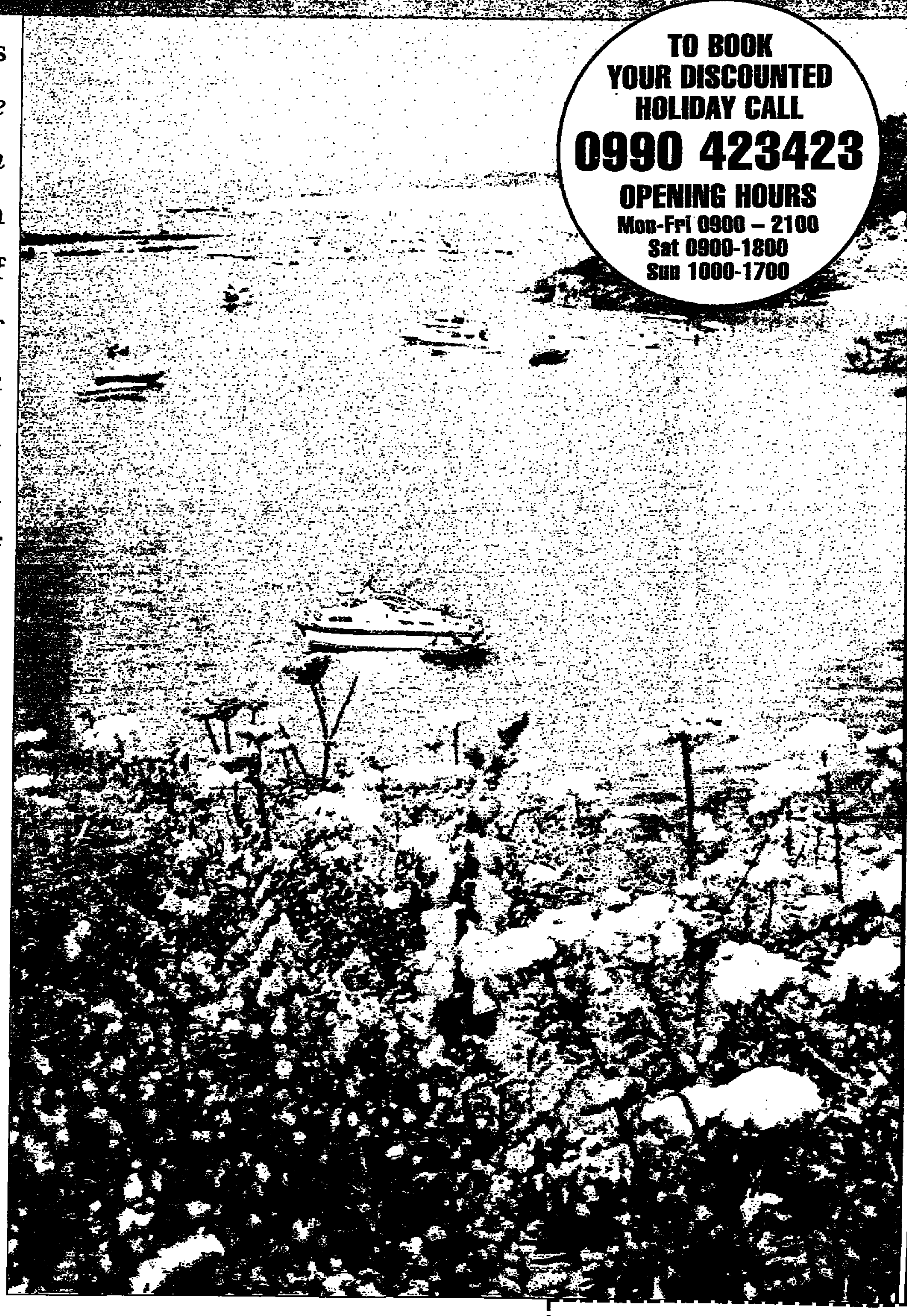


Will your family be looked after when you are six feet under? — *Peter Cook*

THE INDEPENDENT

Save up to 50% on your holiday

Travelworld Direct has teamed up with *The Independent/Independent on Sunday* to provide readers with massive discounts on a range of holidays. You can save up to 50 per cent off the brochure prices on a fabulous selection of summer and winter holidays, tours, cruises and short breaks from a wide range of brochures that will be featured throughout the week.



HOW TO BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY

To take advantage of this offer you need to choose your holiday from any of the brochures featured. You should then call the Travelworld Direct reservation line on 0990 423423. All holidays must be confirmed between Saturday 27th February and Sunday 14th March and you will be required to pay a deposit which will be deducted from your final invoice. The balance of your payment is due 10 weeks before your departure. For bookings made within 10 weeks of departure, payment in full, less the discount, is required at the time of booking. You can use a Switch or Delta debit card, or credit card. Credit-card payments will incur a 1.5% handling charge.

HOW TO RECEIVE YOUR DISCOUNT

To qualify for the appropriate discount you must submit four numbered tokens from either *The Independent or The Independent on Sunday*, with the booking validation form below. A total of nine tokens will be printed between Saturday 27th February and Sunday 7th March 1999. Your tokens and booking validation form must arrive with Travelworld Direct by Sunday 14th March 1999. If Travelworld Direct do not receive your tokens, you will be sent a revised invoice for the full price of your holiday. Tickets and travel documents will normally be supplied 7 to 10 days before departure. Please see the full terms and conditions for this offer that appear at the bottom of this page.

THE TOUR OPERATORS

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Airtours Flight Only
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Mark Warner*
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Sunworld Tropical
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Trek America*
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Airtours Far & Away
Bluebird*
Bridge Cities*
Cox & Kings*
European Life
French Life
Holiday Autos
Libra Priceright
Panorama Cuba
Somak*
Sunquest
Transun*
Virgin Sun

*Only applicable on selected departure dates, destinations and accommodation. See next week's paper for full terms and conditions.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. Offer applies to new bookings only confirmed between 27th February 99 and 14th March 99
2. Participating tour operators terms & conditions of booking apply
3. The offers featured cannot be combined with any other promotional offer available at time of booking unless stated otherwise.
4. A handling charge of 1.5% applies to payments by credit card.
5. Travelworld reserve the right to withdraw any discount offer without notice.
6. Not available in Republic of Ireland
7. All holidays are subject to availability
8. Should you cancel your holiday the applicable discount becomes invalid
9. Applicants must be over 18
10. This promotion has been organised by Travelworld Direct, part of The Travelworld Group, ABTA A7462

APPLICATION FORM (INCLUDE 4 TOKENS)

Name: ....

Address: ....

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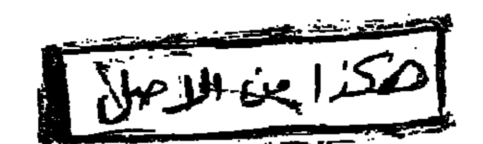
Postcode: ....

Booking Ref. no.: ....

THE INDEPENDENT

1

Send to: The Independent Promotion, Riverside House, Aspley Marina, Wakefield Road, Huddersfield, HD1 3AF



THE INDEPENDENT
Saturday 27 February 1999

UK Equity Growth

Fund	Launch	Min Inv £	Fund Size £M	Offer Price	Latest 1Yr Perf.	Rank
AbbeyAssetEarnings	11/82	1000	50	407.40	93.48	130
AbbeyEnhcd	05/87	1000	42	100.50	89.91	143
‡AbbeyNatlN&PUKGth	11/72	500	97	144.80	103.05	54
‡AberdeenProlSpecialSits	02/82	500	169	191.40	95.65	121
‡AberdeenProlUKGth	08/86	300	399	89.85	105.56	32
‡ABNAMROUKGth	12/95	500	53	391.88	103.28	52
‡AllchurchesAmity	02/88	500	55	118.04	92.92	133
‡Alliance&LeicesterCapGth	02/88	1000	282	83.85	102.39	67
‡AXAEquity&LawBritEncd	07/87	1000	61	143.80	98.19	98
‡AXASunLifeUKGth	08/85	4000	107	147.40	101.03	82
BankOfIrelandCapitalGth	10/84	1000	3	208.20	107.97	19
‡BarclaysCapital	10/57	1000	445	228.71	100.11	87
BaringUKGth	11/87	1000	64	178.6	104.16	45
‡BGIUKGth	11/72	1000	291	871.00	101.46	75
‡BritanniaSelGth	01/84	500	308	222.05	103.94	47
‡BWDEquityGth	01/86	500	5	135.40	101.85	73
CanlifeGeneral	09/71	2000	200	345.30	102.15	69
CavendishOpportunities	02/88	10000	5	243.20	89.58	145
‡CCMGth	12/89	500	33	822.30	98.70	101
‡CCMSpecialSituations	03/71	500	97	185.60	97.67	115
‡CFGHCUKEquity	12/87	1000	5	119.98	108.47	24
‡CGUPPTUKGth	03/84	500	6	297.48	100.27	85
CIMCommunityGth	11/94	25000	0	16810.00	101.91	72
‡CISUKGth	09/69	500	1446	334.10	102.25	68
CityFinclAsts	04/88	500	2	101.20	101.21	78
‡ClericalMedPedigreeGth	09/85	1000	109	100.78	98.62	103
ClericalMedSpecialSits	12/85	1000	48	69.73	97.28	118
‡ColonialTop50	10/85	1000	33	84.94	105.63	31
‡CreditSuisseFellowship	07/86	1000	91	139.10	94.67	127
DresdnerRCMEx	07/85	2500	5	1093.84	107.12	15
‡DresdnerRCMUKGth	03/82	500	113	1112.19	112.08	5
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

UK Equity Income

[illegible]

UK Growth & Income

[illegible]

UK Equity & Bond

[illegible]

UK Equity & Bond Income

[illegible]

UK Gilt

[illegible]

UK Fixed Interest

[illegible]

UK Smaller Companies

[illegible]

Managed Fund

[illegible]

International Equity Growth

[illegible]

International Equity Income

[illegible]

International Equity & Bond

[illegible]

International Fixed Interest

[illegible]

Investment Trust Units

[illegible]

Europe

[illegible]

Far East Excluding Japan

[illegible]

Far East Including Japan

[illegible]

Japan

[illegible]

North America

[illegible]

Emerging Markets

[illegible]

Money Market

[illegible]

Property

[illegible]

Commodity & Energy

[illegible]

Fund of Funds

[illegible]

Index Bear

[illegible]

Balanced Managed

Fund	Launch	Min Inv £	Fund Size £M	Offer Price	Latest 1Yr Perf.	Rank
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
‡ScandiaM.GrenfellManrd	12/90		30	252.80	99.37	82
‡ScandiaNewtonManrd	05/85		33	182.00	108.54	1
‡ScandiaSchroderManrd	04/91		47	215.90	97.50	74
‡StandardLifeManrd	10/78		3088	1177.40	103.08	18
‡SunAllianceManrd	11/77		352	1188.30	98.65	60
‡SunLifeManrd	02/77		1193	1428.20	100.57	48
‡TeachersAssurManrd	11/82		148	591.30	98.15	72
‡UtdFdlyRefugeManrd2	01/83		17	685.40	99.91	56
‡UtdFriendlyManrd2	02/86		73	410.14	101.72	41
‡WesleyanManrd	01/88		90	637.30	102.94	21
‡WindsorLFullyManrd	06/73		980	523.80	98.85	76
‡WinterthurAROUnit	10/82		380	2249.86	101.46	45
‡WoolwichLifeManrd	10/89		217		107.83	3
‡ZurichLifeUKManrd	11/88		13	283.20	104.15	9
Total/Average/Count			24910		101.51	78

This information is listed by sector, not by company, in order to allow investors to define the comparitive perfomance of their trusts relative to others.

Top five performing funds of each sector are highlighted in bold. All funds are more than one year old. Fund sizes taken on the first day of the previous month. Fund performances are calculated on an Offer to Bid price basis with net income reinvested at Xd date and illustrate the value of £100 original investment. Life Funds that are Closed to New Business have been excluded.

‡ denotes a fund available through a Manager's PEP scheme.

STANDARD &POOR'S Micropal
Bloomberg
www.bloomberg.com/uk

It never felt like this before

Felt may be the oldest fabric known to man but it's also hip, happening, and all the rage with style gurus and top designers. And it's much cheaper than cashmere. By Dominic Lutyens

Only the most gullible style slaves, surely, fell for that hip interiors fad, "stealth wealth". You know, inconspicuous consumption in the shape of cushions and throws in such unassumingly muted colours you barely notice they're made of cashmere or suede. But who can be bothered to affect the look, let alone afford it? Far better to opt instead for that equally tactile, humbler and, let's face it, more affordable fabric creeping into homes and wardrobes right now – felt.

If felt is humbler than other fabrics it's not simply because it's cheaper. It's also usually invisible, though ubiquitous: it's used as the underlay for carpets and piano keys. The highest profile it's likely to have enjoyed is as coloured felt-tip pens and – who could forget? – hours-of-fun Fuzzy Felt.

Felt's lowly status surely derives, too, from the fact that, traditionally, it has been put to primarily practical use. Since time immemorial, nomadic tribes in central and western Asia have depended on it as a means of insulation, in their felt *yerts* and blanket coats, or *kepeneks*.

Then there's the fact that felt-making is a crude, basic process. The oldest fabric known to man, felt is made by the simplest of means: when wool fibres (these can come straight off a sheep's back) are rubbed together in the presence of heat and moisture, they mat and bond. Yet felt's very earthiness has, over the years, inspired many a designer at the craftsy end of the market.

Annie Sherburne, who began making felt rugs in 1982, when the fabric held little appeal, talks up its ecological qualities. "It's a renewable resource – as long as there are sheep, we'll have felt." Heather Belcher, who makes hand-rolled felt cushions (from £85), on sale at Heal's from the end of March, says: "I love felt's primal qualities, which suggest warmth and protection." And Asta Barrington prides herself on hand-stitching and hand-dyeing her throws and cushions with felted wool fringes (available from London shops The Cross, Browns and Designers Guild).

Victoria Brown, meanwhile, who makes decorative wall hangings (from £100) using layers of fleece, on sale at Contemporary Applied Arts, is fascinated by the "possibilities of layering colour within the fabric to achieve mysterious colours which appear as a 'bloom' on the surface of the felt".

So much for its folksy pedigree – hip urbanites are warming to it, too. Super-urbane interiors glossy *The World of Interiors* recently featured an article on (appliqué-free) felt. Antwerp-based fashion label, AF Vandervorst, is currently cutting a swathe with its idiosyncratic felt clothing, while London-based Rolf Sachs produces, among other things, a witty (£20) felt wine cooler, available from chic London shop Bowles & Linares.

Due in all probability to the Nineties cross-pollination of fashion and interiors across Europe, metropolitan designers from both fields often share the same influences. AF Vandervorst and Sachs, for example, are both inspired by felt-obsessed artist Joseph Beuys.

"Felt keeps liquids at a constant temperature, so Sachs' cooler keeps wine that's been chilled cool for ages," says Sharon Bowles, of Bowles & Linares, which also stocks a nifty, own-label, felt cafetière cosy. Another Sachs design is an army blanket-grey floor runner (£300). "It's fantastic for bedrooms," swears Bowles.

If you thought Beuys an unlikely mentor for felt designers, how about design company Hive's veneration for that godfather of conceptual art, Marcel Duchamp?

Hive's designers, Monica Piatkowski and Mark Dyson, have come up with a felt chair cover made of a thick slab of industrial felt which slips over a timber armature or stands on its own as a decorative sculpture. Hive's more practical offerings are available from London gallery Mission: ultra-simple porridge-coloured or donkey-brown notebooks encased in blanket-thick felt, which come with carrying handles (from £50) and a cream felt pail (£45), which can be used as a bucket bag or smart wastepaper basket.

German designer Angela Hauser also touts minimalist, urban-chic felt accessories, notably a hotwater bottle with a grey cover wittily stamped with a red cross, tailor-made for those determined not to let flu cramp their style (£29). These, along with similarly swanky slippers and egg cosies, sell at the cult London shop, Egg.

Craftiness and artiness aside, felt is beginning to cater to every taste, from the ultra-classic to the hyper-kitsch. French company Pierre Frey offers a super-deluxe throw in felted cashmere (£178). The General Trading Company stocks Nathalie Hambro's Ref H tote bag (£175), which incorporates stylish rivets, and comes in Chinese lacquer red, indigo or grey. A number of other London stores flog felt, too: Artisan sells – very monastic chic this – a curtain tassel in felted wool with a contrasting jute tieback (£18 for the two), Mulberry tattersal felt cushions with a suede trim (£89), and Liberty grey felt and flannel cushions (from £59). Aero even stocks keyrings dangling wedges of Gruyère cheese in yellow felt (£4.50).

Looking ahead, in the autumn, Paperchase will stock felt-covered photo albums, notebooks and address books. In the meantime, you might want to indulge a child, or for that matter yourself, with Shaker's felt Noah's ark (from £39.95). We're talking Fuzzy Felt in 3D, and then some. What could be better than that?

Stockists: Aero (0171-351 0511); Artisan (0171-498 3979); Bowles & Linares (0171-229 9886); Browns (0171-514 0020); Contemporary Applied Arts Gallery (0171-436 2344); The Cross (0171-727 6760); Designers Guild (0171-351 5775); Egg (0171-235 9315); General Trading Company (0171-730 0411); Heal's (0171-636 1666); Hive (0171-261 9791); Liberty (0171-734 1234); Mission (0171-792 4633); Mulberry (0171-491 3900); Pierre Frey (0171-376 5599); Shaker (0171-935 9461)



From the top: Noah's Ark, from £39.95, Shaker; Heather Belcher's small grey bag, £50, Mint (0171-224 4406); Hive notebooks, from £50, Mission; Rolf Sach's floor runner, £300, Bowles & Linares; felted cashmere cushions, £84 and £105, and throw, £178, Pierre Frey

CHECK IT OUT

MAIL ORDER SOFAS AND BEDS

FED UP with traipsing round stores looking for an end-of-sale bargain? You could have been wasting your time as you can buy a sofa or bed through mail order catalogues for considerably less than the "full price" store items. And their year-round sales mean you don't have to make an impulse buy you may later regret.

Small ads are full of sofas and wrought iron beds for around the £300 mark (expect to pay at least double in the high street), but can you trust the quality?

Sofa Workshop Direct is the mail order arm of its bespoke, high street stable mate, Sofa Workshop. The former advertises sofas for just over £300, the latter sells custom-made models from £699. The mail order sofa is cheaper, as it is only available in a limited range of fabrics and styles, the cushion interiors are standard, and it's guaranteed for three instead of 10 years for the custom-made version. What you see in the brochure is what you get, factory born and bred.

You also have the advantage of a 21-day money back guarantee if you change your mind after delivery, as long as the furniture is returned in mint condition. "We do have some returns, but it's generally because the sofa is too big for the room, or the colour didn't match the decor," says Sofa Workshop Direct managing director, Euan Kelway-Bamber.

The company is aware that its showroom, alongside its factory in Wales, has helped customers make their final decision. "People like the fabric samples they are sent in the post, but something holds them back. There's a general misapprehension that anything mail order is cheap and nasty, but they're always pleasantly surprised at the quality they are getting for the price."

Low overheads and limited choice give the mail order manufacturer the edge on price. As does furniture that can be paid for on delivery, instead of weeks in advance.

There's nothing like a good sales pitch to get customers rushing to place their order. Special deals from "cancelled orders" seem to run and run.

Cannock Direct is currently having a "factory clearance" of double wrought-iron beds in a choice of three styles for £245 each, including delivery. But how can you gauge the quality of a mail order bed? Fabric samples are easy to view by post, but assessing an iron bed is a bit more difficult.

The Handcrafted Bed Company sends customers metal samples in any one of the 12 finishes they produce. Marketing director Jacqueline Hughes says a well-designed brochure increases sales. "Mail order is becoming more acceptable, but you can't expect to sell stock from scrappy line drawings." A recent client survey showed that 40 per cent of their customers are professionals with a high disposable income and limited time for shopping.

Seductive magazine-style directories devoted to interiors are a far cry from the big-book catalogues full of underwear and nylon bedspreads. Most firms also have 24-hour order lines and websites to make the customer's life even easier. Some people just haven't got the time to struggle round the shops any more.

The high street stores know that they cannot be left behind. Many now offer a mail order facility: convenient it may be, but it's not necessarily for the bargain hunter.

FIONA BRANDHORST

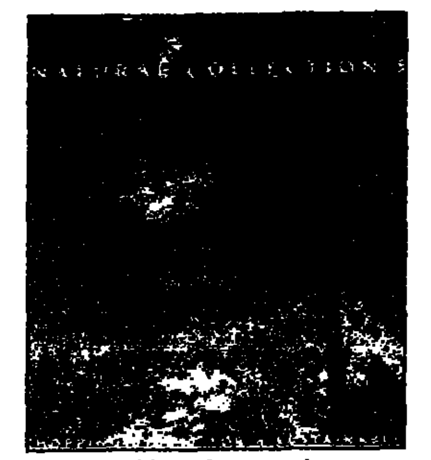
*Sofa Workshop Direct (01443 238 699 *), www.sofaworkshopdirect.co.uk; Cannock Direct (01543 462 500 *), www.cannock.gate.uk.com; Handcrafted Bed Company (0115 965 6575 *)*



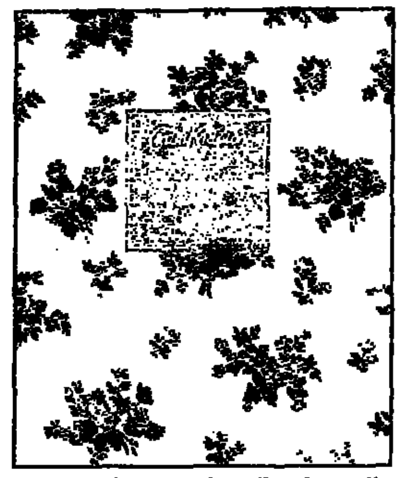
Wrought-iron Gothic double bed, £225, Cannock Direct (01543 462 500 *); Coniston three-seater sofa in natural, with washable covers, £469, Sofa Workshop Direct (01443 238 699 *)

SIX OF THE BEST

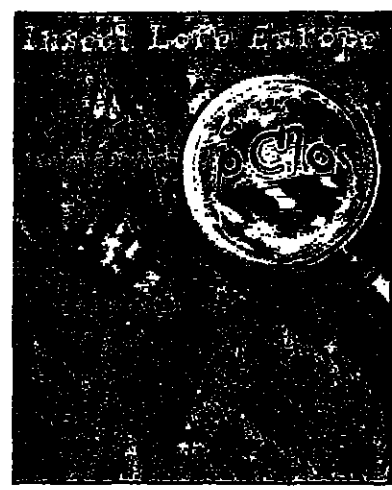
MAIL ORDER CATALOGUES



Products with minimum environmental impact from clothing to lip balm and fridges, Natural Collection (01225 442 288 *)



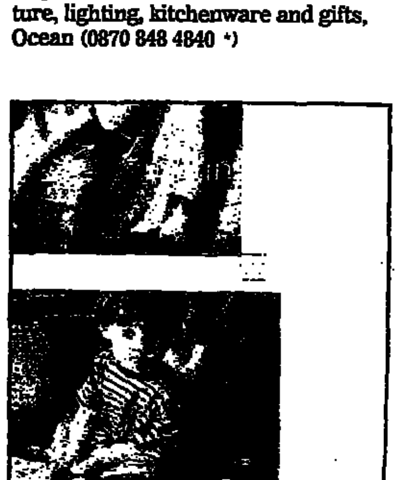
Cheerful chintz fabrics, oilcloths, wallpaper and bags of accessories, Cath Kidston (0171-221 4000 *)



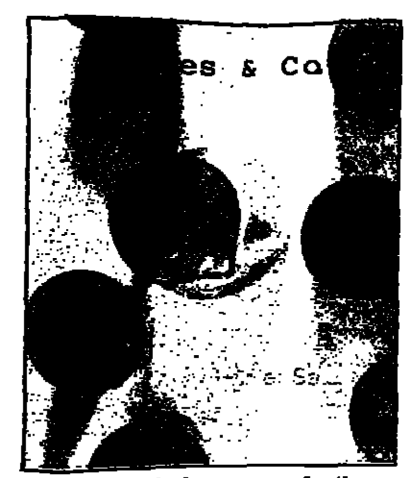
Insect Lore Europe's catalogue teems with more than enough games and insect life to hold any budding entomologist's attention (01908 200 794 *)



"Style for the modern home" – furniture, lighting, kitchenware and gifts, Ocean (0870 848 4840 *)



Jolly, bright and practical woollen rugs, cushions and throws, Melin Tregwynt (01348 891 644 *)



Fresh and funky homewares for the nursery to the home office – lingering quite a while in the kitchen en route, Grimes & Co (00 353 1667 5627 *)

Waxing lyrical about the light

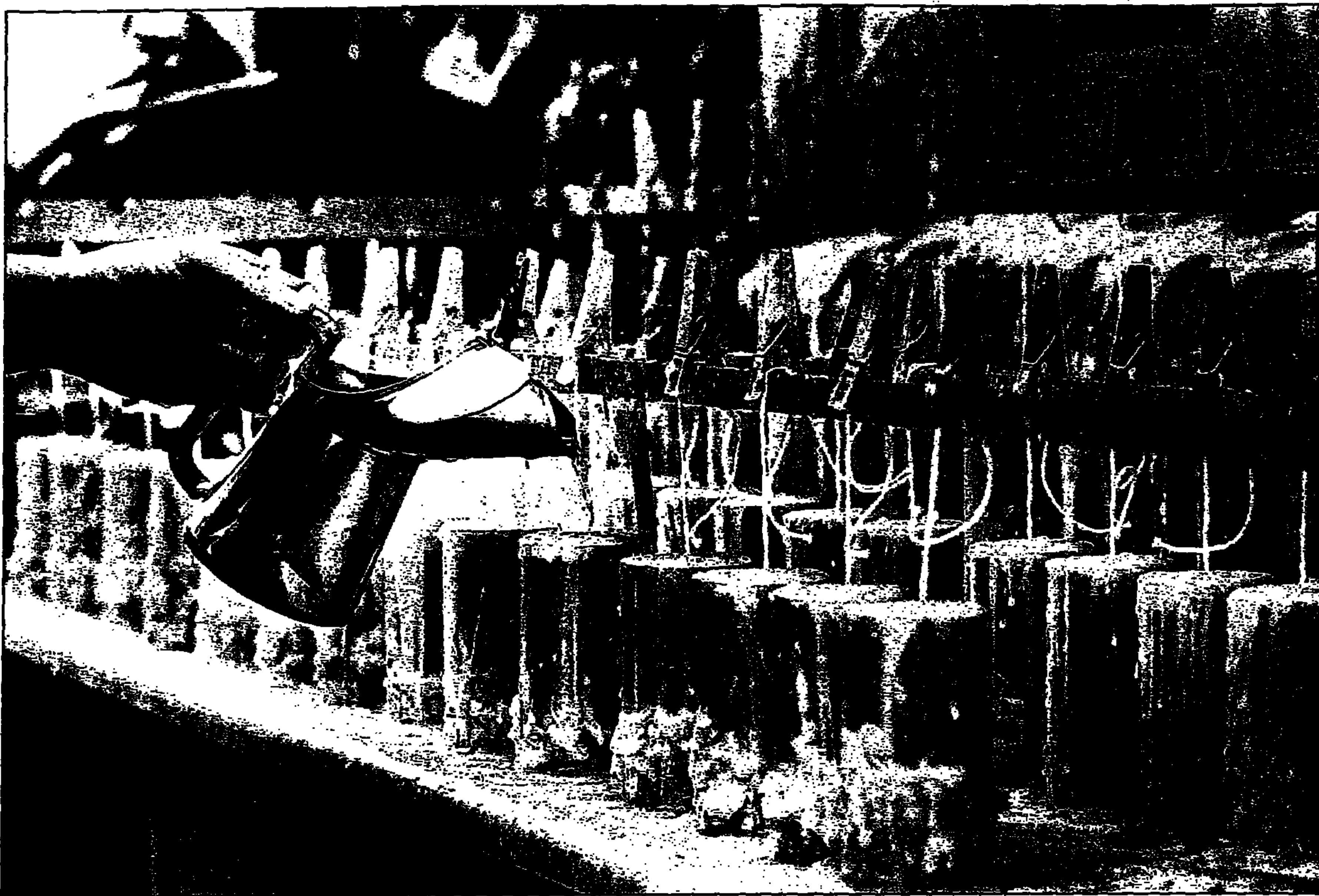
Once an emergency light source, now a top home accessory – the candle comes into its own. By **Ros Byam Shaw**

Candles haven't been this popular since the dark, cold nights of the miners' strikes. Then it was a matter of stark necessity – shallow, luke-warm baths by the light of a couple of stubs stuck on saucers. Today it's a matter of style. Flick through any of the design magazines – candles have migrated from the back of the kitchen drawer and the formal dinner setting to the mantelpiece, the hearth and the coffee table. There are scented candles, floating candles, garden flares and night-lights. Shops like Angelic sell nothing but candles. Price's Patent Candle Company has opened gift shops. People give them as presents instead of soap or flowers.

Smartest and most desirable of all are church candles, plain, cream, natural, a fashionable blend of the sensual and the minimal. Pillar versions are particularly covetable. These are candles fit for cathedrals, designed to burn slowly with an even flame, emitting a faint whiff of monastic beeswax.

Sad to say, not all so-called church candles deserve the name. Most, however big, fat and creamy, contain not a smidgen of beeswax. Far from burning with pious dignity, they make a fuss about it, smoking and spluttering, and disappearing with unseemly haste. While even the finest candles drip and gutter in a draught, badly made ones do it anyway, producing Seventies wine bar-style stalactites and stalagmites of beaded wax. Pillar candles are particularly vulnerable to unsightly distortions. If the wick is not sufficiently absorbent, a pillar candle will burn down its middle, leaving wobbly walls of unburnt wax which obscure the flame and spoil the image. Before you know it, your clean, simple, late-Nineties icon has melted to form waxy sculptures like something nasty from a Dali poster.

It was with these impostors in mind that brother and sister Elizabeth Carruth and Simon Tyler of E & S Churchill took up the challenge to make the perfect church candle. They are far too modest to pronounce their products "perfect", though customers say they are near-as-dammit – glossy with an almost luminous sheen, a pale golden colour, honey-scented and engineered to burn with almost 100 per cent efficiency, given ideal conditions. Clients who make repeat orders can even benefit from a virtually bespoke service. The new bar/restaurant/gallery at 291 Hackney Rd, London E2 – appropriately enough, a deconsecrated church – burns their pillar candles with wicks specially adjusted to compensate for the ecclesiastical draughts.



Molten wax is poured by hand from a tin jug into the waiting pre-warmed candle moulds *John Lawrence*

Back at the experimental stage, Elizabeth and Simon's first priority was to get the mixture of waxes right. In the heyday of the great monasteries, monks made candles using pure beeswax from their hives, dipping long cotton wicks into vats of melted wax until they achieved the desired size. At a time when all but the very wealthy had to rely on rush lights and tapers, which burned animal fats and were extremely smelly and inefficient, the church candle was a luxury. It was also highly symbolic – a light in the darkness of a sinning world.

At some stage, the beeswax itself took on symbolic significance. One story is that bees were absent from the Garden of Eden and so escaped the taint of sin. Another – too charming to dismiss – is that medieval biologists thought that bees reproduced by immaculate conception. For whatever reason, the beeswax content of a church candle came to signify purity.

Most churches have ceased to insist on any beeswax content. Charles Farris, a division of Prices, which has a virtual monopoly as suppliers of candles in this country, still make some candles by hand. These contain up to 25 per cent beeswax. Their machine-made church candles contain 10 per cent. According to manager Alan Matthews, only the "staunch old-timers" of the Roman Catholic church continue to request 25 per cent beeswax.

Unbleached beeswax makes a candle smell good, lends it a delicious shade of pale sunshine, and burns well. Despite its expense, Simon and Elizabeth decided their candles should contain 30 per cent beeswax. It arrives in their tiny, lean-to workshop, looking for all the world like yellow lentils. They mix it with stearine, a palm oil derivative, and paraffin wax, melting their ingredients to a golden liquid in two Baby Burco boilers which slurp and steam continuously as they work.

The only other component of a candle is the wick. E & S Churchill use two types of wick, both cotton, plaited or square braided. They are supplied by Yorkshire rope and braid makers, W R Outhwaite & Son.

The number of individual strands in a wick determine its absorbency. Adding or subtracting a few of these tiny strands can make the difference between a candle that drips furiously and one that hardly drips at all. More than this, a wick must curl as it burns to ensure that its tip will burn off in the hottest part of the flame. To achieve this curl, the plait or braid of a wick is always woven asymmetrically, with a few extra strands in one of the threads.

After being cut to length, wicks are dipped in molten wax to ensure that one end will be stiff enough to poke through the hole at the bottom of the mould, and then whisked outside the workshop where they are swung back and forth to shake off the excess wax.

The glass candle moulds are made locally, by a glassmaker who specialises in making test-tubes. The smaller, dinner candle-size moulds sit in holes drilled through a workbench. The wicks are dropped in and manoeuvred through the small hole at the bottom of the mould which is then plugged by a blob of gardener's putty which also holds the end of the wick in place. The other end of the wick is wound round a small metal rod and secured with a clothes peg. Now the moulds are ready to receive the molten wax which Elizabeth scoops from a Baby Burco with a tin jug before pouring it carefully info each mould.

Even though she has pre-warmed the moulds with a fan heater balanced on a cardboard box, the wax begins to set almost immediately, clouding from the bottom upwards. While the wax is hardening, the candles need constant attention to ensure that no air bubbles are formed as the liquid shrinks and solidifies. This is the stage they refer to as "wick-wiggling", an entirely self-explanatory technique and essential to the production of a good candle. As the wax settles, the mould needs topping up and, with the last wiggle, Elizabeth must ensure the wick is hanging straight and centrally.

Fatter candles are made in moulds that sit on the bench top where a wooden frame has been constructed to hold the wicks in place. These larger candles need more drastic treatment than a bit of wick wiggling. As they set, Elizabeth continually pokes deep into them with a wooden stick, again ensuring that all air bubble are released.

Once the wax has set, the dinner candles, still in their moulds, are put in the freezer for about half an hour to ease their release from the mould.

> *In the heyday of the monasteries, the candle represented light in the darkness of a sinning world*

They slip out, shiny and unblemished, ready for finishing. From this point until sale, no one touches the surface of the candle. Elizabeth handles them with a satin petticoat as she smoothes off their ends against a hot iron, or lifts them by their wicks for packing. They are pristine, smooth as silk – perfect.

The workshop may be tiny, the equipment unsophisticated, but E & S Churchill are turning out and selling more than 300 handmade candles a week. Moreover, the small scale of their business means that they can make candles of any size to order (although one-offs are unlikely to be economic).

Their next project is a candle made from 100 per cent beeswax. The prototype has been a success – in fact they rave about it. It doesn't smoke; it's very long-burning, and it has an amazing aroma. It will be expensive, they say, but then perfection always has its price.

E & S Churchill candles are supplied direct from Camden Lock Market (West Yard) on Saturdays and Sundays, Spitalfields Market on Sundays, Greenwich Market on Saturdays and Sundays, and by mail order (0171-739 2684)

Snap away to your heart's content and never buy a film again; oh the joy of going digital. By **Tif Hunter**

The techie way to take a pic

AS A recent arrival to the iMac age, I am wedded to the idea of digital technology being easy to use, straight out of the box.

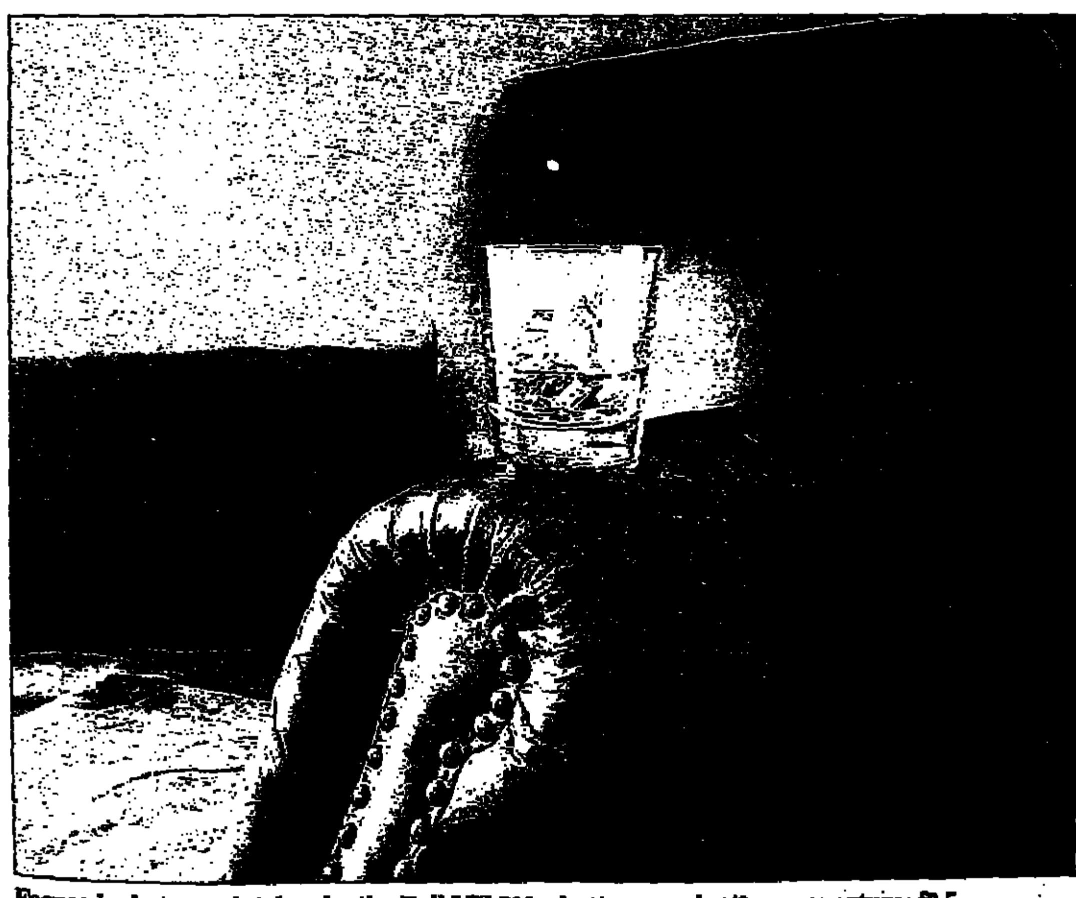
These days we're all conversant with taking snaps on anything from throwaway cameras to state-of-the-art SLRs. But how easy is it to pick up a digital camera and take decent pictures? If you're able to play computer games or visit the Internet, then you really shouldn't have that much of a problem, and the idea of creating (possibly also manipulating) and then printing your own pictures without having to ferry the film to a photo shop to be processed is attractive. And there is a huge choice out there, ranging from entry-level £100 cameras to advanced pieces of equipment costing more than £5,000.

The cameras we have reviewed cost between £350 and £650. The price pretty much determines the quality of the final picture. Where they quote resolution, the higher the numbers (eg 1280x1024), the sharper your enlargements.

All the cameras give you choices about taking pictures at various quality settings, and this controls the number of images you can store; fewer at high quality, more at basic quality. Storage is on a memory card, which may be between two and eight megabytes. But the beauty is that you have an instant display from the screen on the camera's back; if you don't like what you've taken you can dump it. On all these cameras – except the Kodak – the bonus of the screen is the ability to view a live image and to compose without looking through the viewfinder.

The cameras come with a variety of extras: manuals, cables to connect to the television and computer and CD-roms with useful software.

I liked the fact that the Fuji MX-700 put all the software on one CD-rom instead of two or more, like the others. Nikon made life simple by providing a single sheet of paper with all the camera's functions explained and put the boring stuff on to a CD-rom for reference when necessary.



Focused: photograph taken by the Fuji MX-700, shutter speed: 1/8 sec; aperture: f3.5

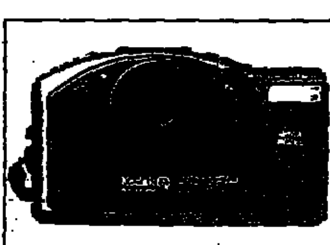
There's one other aspect of buying a new toy: style. Here the Fuji MX-700 wins hands down. It is small and perfectly formed to go in a pocket and comes with funky controls and displays. I wasn't so keen on the looks of the Nikon Coolpix 900, but its swivel lens is a brilliant concept, allowing you to shoot over people's heads in a crowd and see what you're taking on an LCD screen.

The Olympus Camedia C840L is a neat little camera, and I liked the sliding cover, which protects the lens when not in use. The Kodak DC210 plus is hardly a design icon, but the controls are clear and simple to use.

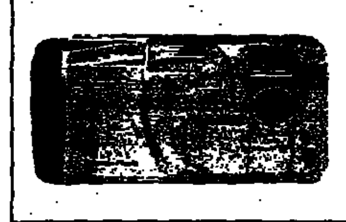
The Camedia's controls are not intuitive and the symbols by each button are rather obscure. The Fuji makes setting up before taking a picture great fun with electronic bleeps and flashing lights, but it offers too many options. Also, like the Camedia, the MX700 has a digital zoom, which is not really a zoom at all. You either get wide-angle or telephoto; nothing in between.

Both the Coolpix 900 and the DC210 plus have optical zooms, giving many more framing options. The Coolpix, although not a thing of beauty, handles easily and gives superb results.

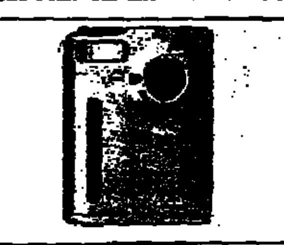
The writer is a practising advertising photographer



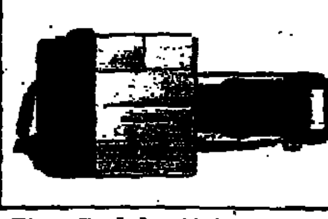
Kodak DC210 plus (c£380)
Pro: easy to use, optical zoom
Con: no live screen image



Olympus Camedia C840L (£425)
Pro: good lens, clear monitor, sliding lens cover
Con: controls difficult to master



Fuji MX-700 (c£450)
Pro: pocket size, style object
Con: digital, not optical zoom



Nikon Coolpix 900 (c£620)
Pro: excellent image quality
Con: strange looks

DESIGN LINES

TOAD HALL and Eeyore's field of thistles; Mrs Tiggywinkle's kitchen, piled high with clean washing – the notion of home in children's literature is a particularly powerful one, as characters are often defined by where they live. The Architectural Gallery's spring season opens with an exhibition focusing on literary houses, from Dickens and Beatrix Potter, Lucy Boston and AA Milne. A related exhibition, Through a Child's Eye, investigates how modern children see their own homes. *Child's Eye: Houses in Children's Books is at the Architecture Gallery, 66 Portland Place, London W1 (0171-307 3641) until 13 March, Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm. Through a Child's Eye runs from 20 Mar-1 May. Admission free*

WANT TO sit about in style? Search out *Sitting on the Edge*, a lavishly illustrated volume of 100 chairs, couches and other modernist seating furniture and objects culled from the collection of Michael and Gabrielle Boyd, published next month by Rizzoli International (£26.95). Michael Boyd provides the introduction, Aaron Betsky, Paola Antonelli and Philippe Garner contribute essays.
The book accompanies an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco, which showcases great modern masters including Le Corbusier, Peter Behrens, Marco Zanuso and Otto Wagner
ALTHOUGH

CUTHBERT Brodrick, architect and Francophile, who retired to live near Paris, was active in his profession for only 25 years, from 1845 to 1870, his work, extravagantly over-the-top and largely influenced by Continental models, inspired much of the municipal architecture in this country as well as parts of the Empire and the United States. Today he's probably best known for the baroque splendour of the Grand Hotel at Scarborough, described by Henry-Russell Hitchcock as "the climax of English Second Empire", but a current exhibition at the Riba Heinz Gallery will provide a new introduction to his work. *Towers and Colonnades: the architecture of Cuthbert Brodrick is at the Heinz Gallery, 21 Portman Square, London W1 (0171-307 3628) until 6 Mar and at Leeds City Art Gallery, 17 Apr-20 June*

RESEARCH INTO the history of design and style has just been made a whole lot easier with the opening of a new bookshop and gallery specialising in modern out-of-print and rare books, magazines and prints on architecture, art, design, graphics and photography.
Book Art and Architecture is conveniently near the new British Library.
Book Art and Architecture is at 12 Woburn Walk, Bloomsbury, London WC1 (0171-387 5006)

Left: competition design for the Corn Exchange (unexecuted), by Cuthbert Broderick

he light

s own. By Ros Byam Shaw

DESIGN LINES

It never felt like this before

Felt may be the oldest fabric known to man but it's also hip, happening, and all the rage with style gurus and top designers. And it's much cheaper than cashmere. By Dominic Lutyens

Only the most gullible style slaves, surely, fell for that hip interiors fad, "stealth wealth". You know, inconspicuous consumption in the shape of cushions and throws in such unassumingly muted colours you barely notice they're made of cashmere or suede. But who can be bothered to affect the look, let alone afford it? Far better to opt instead for that equally tactile, humbler and, let's face it, more affordable fabric creeping into homes and wardrobes right now – felt.

If felt is humbler than other fabrics it's not simply because it's cheaper. It's also usually invisible, though ubiquitous: it's used as the underlay for carpets and piano keys. The highest profile it's likely to have enjoyed is as coloured felt-tip pens and – who could forget? – hours-of-fun Fuzzy Felt.

Felt's lowly status surely derives, too, from the fact that, traditionally, it has been put to primarily practical use. Since time immemorial, nomadic tribes in central and western Asia have depended on it as a means of insulation, in their felt *yerts* and blanket coats, or *kepeneks*.

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"Felt keeps liquids at a constant temperature, so Sachs' cooler keeps wine that's been chilled cool for ages," says Sharon Bowles, of Bowles & Linares, which also stocks a nifty, own-label, felt cafetière cosy. Another Sachs design is an army blanket-grey floor runner (£300). "It's fantastic for bedrooms," swears Bowles.

If you thought Beuys an unlikely mentor for felt designers, how about design company Hive's veneration for that godfather of conceptual art, Marcel Duchamp?

Hive's designers, Monica Piatkowski and Mark Dyson, have come up with a felt chair cover made of a thick slab of industrial felt which slips over a timber armature or stands on its own as a decorative sculpture. Hive's more practical offerings are available from London gallery Mission: ultra-simple porridge-coloured or donkey-brown notebooks encased in blanket-thick felt, which come with carrying handles (from £50) and a cream felt pail (£45), which can be used as a bucket bag or smart wastepaper basket.

German designer Angela Hauser also touts minimalist, urban-chic felt accessories, notably a hotwater bottle with a grey cover wittily stamped with a red cross, tailor-made for those determined not to let flu cramp their style (£29). These, along with similarly swanky slippers and egg cosies, sell at the cult London shop, Egg.

Craftiness and artiness aside, felt is beginning to cater to every taste, from the ultra-classic to the hyper-kitsch. French company Pierre Frey offers a super-deluxe throw in felted cashmere (£178). The General Trading Company stocks Nathalie Hambro's Ref H tote bag (£175), which incorporates stylish rivets, and comes in Chinese lacquer red, indigo or grey. A number of other London stores flog felt, too: Artisan sells – very monastic chic this – a curtain tassel in felted wool with a contrasting jute tieback (£18 for the two), Mulberry tattersal felt cushions with a suede trim (£89), and Liberty grey felt and flannel cushions (from £59). Aero even stocks keyrings dangling wedges of Gruyère cheese in yellow felt (£4.50).

Looking ahead, in the autumn, Paperchase will stock felt-covered photo albums, notebooks and address books. In the meantime, you might want to indulge a child, or for that matter yourself, with Shaker's felt Noah's ark (from £39.95). We're talking Fuzzy Felt in 3D, and then some. What could be better than that?

Stockists: Aero (0171-351 0511); Artisan (0171-498 3979); Bowles & Linares (0171-229 9886); Browns (0171-514 0020); Contemporary Applied Arts Gallery (0171-436 2344); The Cross (0171-727 6760); Designers Guild (0171-351 5775); Egg (0171-235 9315); General Trading Company (0171-730 0411); Heal's (0171-636 1666); Hive (0171-261 9791); Liberty (0171-734 1234); Mission (0171-792 4633); Mulberry (0171-491 3900); Pierre Frey (0171-376 5599); Shaker (0171-935 9461)



From the top: Noah's Ark, from £39.95, Shaker; Heather Belcher's small grey bag, £50, Mint (0171-224 4406); Hive notebooks, from £50, Mission; Rolf Sach's floor runner, £300, Bowles & Linares; felted cashmere cushions, £84 and £105, and throw, £178, Pierre Frey

CHECK IT OUT

MAIL ORDER SOFAS AND BEDS

FED UP with traipsing round stores looking for an end-of-sale bargain? You could have been wasting your time as you can buy a sofa or bed through mail order catalogues for considerably less than the "full price" store items. And their year-round sales mean you don't have to make an impulse buy you may later regret.

Small ads are full of sofas and wrought iron beds for around the £300 mark (expect to pay at least double in the high street), but can you trust the quality?

Sofa Workshop Direct is the mail order arm of its bespoke, high street stable mate, Sofa Workshop. The former advertises sofas for just over £300, the latter sells custom-made models from £899. The mail order sofa is cheaper, as it is only available in a limited range of fabrics and styles, the cushion interiors are standard, and it's guaranteed for three instead of 10 years for the custom-made version. What you see in the brochure is what you get, factory born and bred.

You also have the advantage of a 21-day money back guarantee if you change your mind after delivery, as long as the furniture is returned in mint condition. "We do have some returns, but it's generally because the sofa is too big for the room, or the colour didn't match the decor," says Sofa Workshop Direct managing director, Euan Kelway-Bamber.

The company is aware that its showroom, alongside its factory in Wales, has helped customers make their final decision. "People like the fabric samples they are sent in the post, but something holds them back. There's a general misapprehension that anything mail order is cheap and nasty, but they're always pleasantly surprised at the quality they are getting for the price."

Low overheads and limited choice give the mail order manufacturer the edge on price. As does furniture that can be paid for on delivery, instead of weeks in advance.

There's nothing like a good sales pitch to get customers rushing to place their order. Special deals from "cancelled orders" seem to run and run.

Cannock Direct is currently having a "factory clearance" of double wrought-iron beds in a choice of three styles for £245 each, including delivery. But how can you gauge the quality of a mail order bed? Fabric samples are easy to view by post, but assessing an iron bed is a bit more difficult.

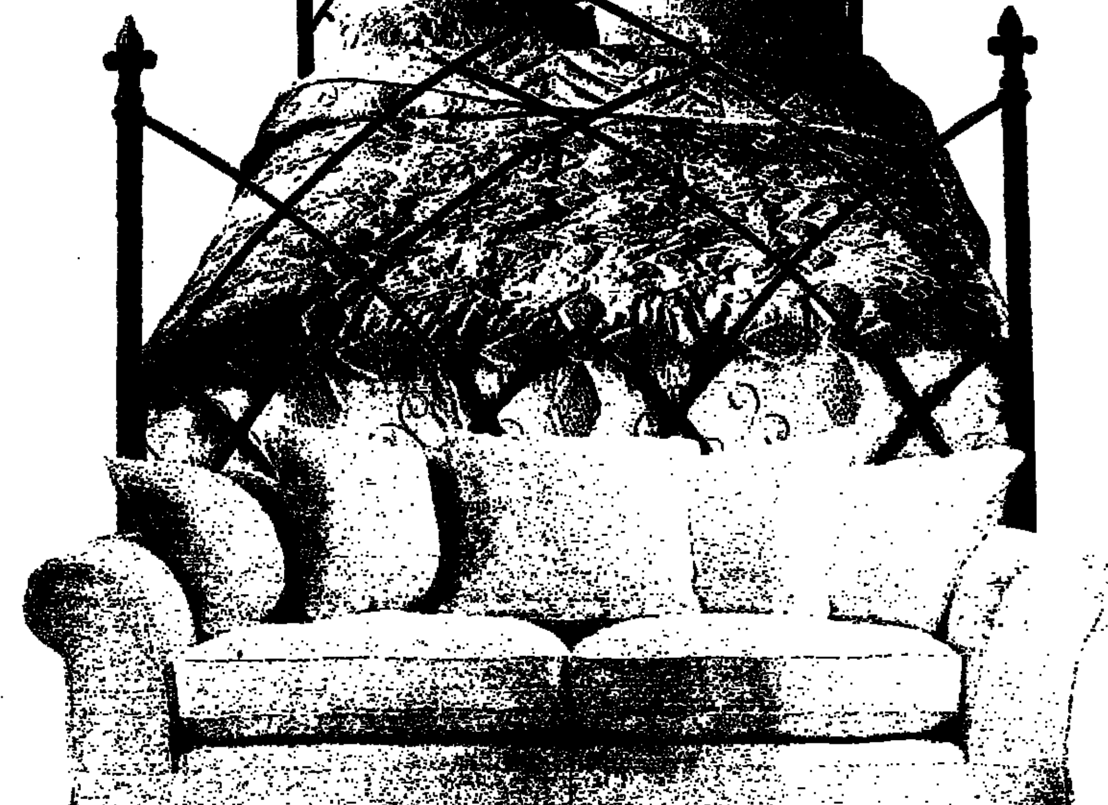
The Handcrafted Bed Company sends customers metal samples in any one of the 12 finishes they produce. Marketing director Jacqueline Hughes says a well-designed brochure increases sales. "Mail order is becoming more acceptable, but you can't expect to sell stock from scrappy line drawings." A recent client survey showed that 40 per cent of their customers are professionals with a high disposable income and limited time for shopping.

Seductive magazine-style directories devoted to interiors are a far cry from the big-book catalogues full of underwear and nylon bedspreads. Most firms also have 24-hour order lines and websites to make the customer's life even easier. Some people just haven't got the time to struggle round the shops any more.

The high street stores know that they cannot be left behind. Many now offer a mail order facility: convenient it may be, but it's not necessarily for the bargain hunter.

FIONA BRANDHORST

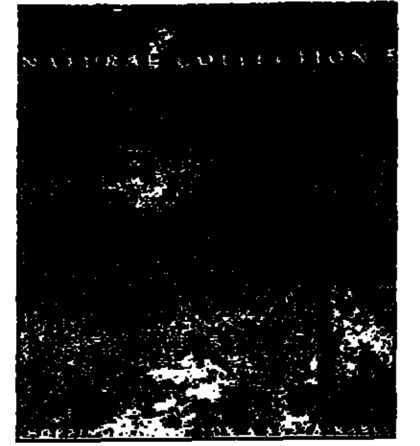
*Sofa Workshop Direct (01443 238 699 *), www.sofaworkshopdirect.co.uk; Cannock Direct (01543 462 500 *), www.cannock.gate.uk.com; Handcrafted Bed Company (0115 965 6575 *)*



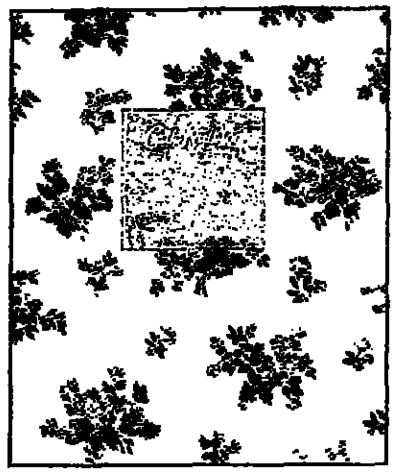
Wrought-iron Gothic double bed, £225, Cannock Direct (01543 462 500 *); Coniston three-seater sofa in natural, with washable covers, £469, Sofa Workshop Direct (01443 238 699 *)

SIX OF THE BEST

MAIL ORDER CATALOGUES



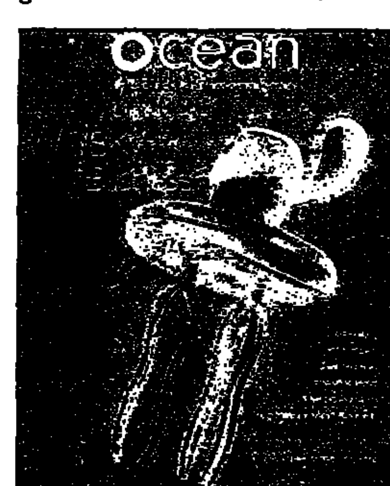
Products with minimum environmental impact from clothing to lip balm and fridges, Natural Collection (01225 442 288 *)



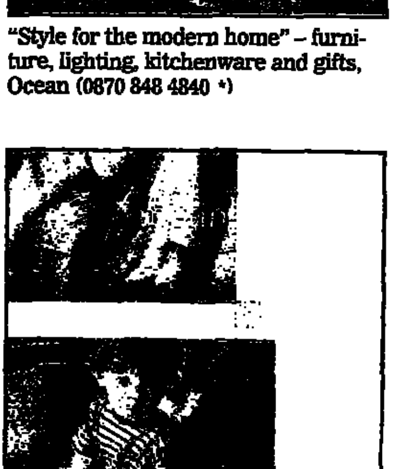
Cheerful chintz fabrics, oilcloths, wallpaper and bags of accessories, Cath Kidston (0171-221 4000 *)



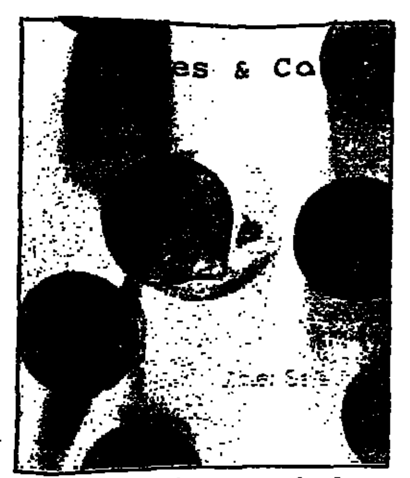
Insect Lore Europe's catalogue teems with more than enough games and insect life to hold any budding entomologist's attention (01908 200 794 *)



"Style for the modern home" – furniture, lighting, kitchenware and gifts, Ocean (0870 848 4840 *)



Jolly, bright and practical woollen rugs, cushions and throws, Melin Tregwynt (01348 891 644 *)



Fresh and funky homewares for the nursery to the home office – lingering quite a while in the kitchen en route, Grimes & Co (00 353 1667 5627 *)

Big brother is watching

After the success of the Shogun, Mitsubishi's new 4x4 has a lot to live up to. By **Roger Bell**

Barring a major recession, sales of 4x4s in Britain will comfortably exceed 100,000 this year. And that's not counting "utility" vehicles, such as the Land Rover Defender, or the various all-terrain pickups. What was once largely a wellie-brigade niche market, accounting for fewer than 5,000

THE INDEPENDENT
ROAD TEST

registrations annually, has evolved into a mainstream one.

Land Rover's Freelander is top of the pops, followed by its Discovery stablemate. Bully for Rover: it needs the cash and the kudos. In third place, confirming that newcomers tend to expand the market rather than dent the establishment, is Honda's CRV. Toyota's Rav 4 was fourth, Vauxhall's Frontera fifth and that old stalwart, the Mitsubishi Shogun, sixth.

However, the position of the respected Shogun, which has been at the heart of Britain's loony romance with 4x4s since the early Eighties, could now be threatened by an in-house rival.

High-waisted and low-roofed, the new Challenger is not everyone's idea of perfect wheels. Mitsubishi's contention that it has great street cred ("just the sort of distinctive vehicle to have on the driveway") overlooks certain innate 4x4 disadvantages, not least that of performance-blunting weight. Economy isn't a strength, either. Nor, by luxury saloon standards, is ride comfort or agility.

At £20,000-£25,000, depending on engine and equipment, the Challenger splits the Freelander and the Discovery on price. Billed as a sports utility, it is seen by Mitsubishi more as an off-road estate, rather than the last word in mountain scramblers.

Like the Shogun, it has part-time four-wheel drive (on Tarmac only the back wheels are driven), giant tyres, stilt-like ground clearance, high- and low-ratio gears and huge towing muscle – all the attributes expected of a butch off-roader, even though they are rarely used.

So what makes the ornately toothy Challenger different? Not a lot. Being of modest stature and width, it will fit most garages and car-parks, just like a normal estate. Rear legroom is also surprisingly generous. The high floor is a mixed blessing: it provides a lofty, over-the-hedge view – good for safety and rubber-necking – at the expense of easy loading.

Humping hefty luggage into the big boot calls for a winch. Getting in and out without soiling your clothes on the old-fashioned running board is also tricky.

The Challenger's well-appointed cabin may be as welcoming in decor and finish as that of any uprange saloon, but it is not so comfortable. I could not fault the Challenger's excellent front seats, but its compromised suspension makes for a knobbly ride.

Although performance of the diesel version on test felt no more than adequate, the engine is impressively smooth, thanks to vibration-killing balancer shafts. It is the gearing that is flawed, with top being far too low for relaxed motorway cruising – at 70mph, it sounds as though you're stuck in third. The quicker, more expensive petrol V6, expected to be the minority seller, is far quieter and more relaxed at speed than the fussy diesel. If price and economy are not your priorities, it is the model to have.



The Mitsubishi Challenger – great front seats do not a great 4x4 make

SPECIFICATIONS

Make, model and price: Mitsubishi Challenger 2.5TD, from £20,365 on the road. **Engine:** 2477cc turbo-diesel, four cylinders, eight valves, two balancer shafts, 98bhp at 4000rpm. **Transmission:** five-speed manual gearbox, high and low ranges, two- and four-wheel drive. **Performance:** max speed 90mph, 0-60mph in 18sec, fuel consumption 22.4mpg combined.

RIVALS

Chrysler Jeep Cherokee 2.5td, from £19,520. US-built Cherokee (ninth best-selling 4x4 in UK last year) is that bit quicker than the Challenger but is not so roomy.

Land Rover Freelander 2.0di five-door, from £19,420. Britain's best-selling off-roader is not so roomy as the Challenger, but it's quicker and more economical. Better off-road, too.

Nissan Terrano 2.7tdi five-door, from £22,395. Terrano (11th best-selling last year) is pricey but good – if you can stand gawky looks.

Vauxhall Frontera 2.5tds five-door, from £19,945. Looks like old Frontera, but much improved. Once second in 4x4 sales, could recover if reliability sorted.

Hi-tech ways to avoid the jams

I'M LATE and it's the early-morning rush hour on the southern section of the M25, a time and a place where it is essential to have up-to-date traffic information.

All over the country, more than 1.2 million motorists get caught up in jams every day. This congestion results in 2.7 million lost man hours and costs the economy some £129m. So alerting drivers about trouble ahead and steering them out of a jam is an area of research which is rapidly developing in importance.

Even the BBC has come up with a travel service which is set to revolutionise the way we get our travel information. But, for the time being, what are the options on a Friday morning?

The majority of in-car music systems are now equipped with Radio Data Signalling (RDS), which not only retunes your radio for the best reception in whatever broadcast area you are driving through, but also interrupts your tape, CD, or radio programme with the latest local travel bulletin. This morning, my RDS system introduces me to BBC Radio Kent with a warning about delays between junctions eight and nine on the M25. So an RDS radio is a pretty good first line of defence against traffic congestion, although there are a number of other gadgets.

Out of the corner of my eye I can see a flashing amber light. That must be my RAC Traffic Alert 1210. As a member of the RAC I can get the 1210 package for £19.99, which also includes a Nokia digital phone. The little black crucifix-shaped 1210 unit runs on three AAA batteries and has an array of lights pointing to all points of the compass. It also beeps at you.

If the light furthest from the centre comes on, it means that the hold-up is more than two junctions away, or eight to 12 miles on an A road. If the middle light comes on, then the problem is up to two junctions away, or four to eight miles. The nearest light to the centre of the unit illuminates when the trouble is before the next junction, or up to four miles away on an A road. The lights also glow amber or red to signify delays of up to and beyond 25 minutes. The unit beeps three times when you join the network and the road ahead is clear, or five times if there is a problem up ahead.

The really clever part is when you use a Cellnet mobile phone. I did and it told me exactly where I was on the M25. It gave much more detailed information about the delay up ahead. By dialling 1, followed by the number of the motorway, in this case 3 for M3, I got up-to-the-minute information for that route. Dialling 0 put me in touch with an RAC Traffic Information Adviser, who told me about alternative routes.

Working closely with the RAC on all this is Traffic Master, the acknowledged market leader. The company has more than 7,000 sensors nationwide, which detect changes in vehicle speeds. When the average speed drops below 30mph, a signal is transmitted to Traffic Master's data centre and from there to vehicles equipped with one of its products.

The entry-level system is Traffic Master Freeway. Priced at £79.99 plus an annual subscription charge of £24, it relays live traffic information. A lot more sophisticated is the YQ, at £149.99, with an annual subscription of £110, which features a screen display. It allows the user to call up local motorway areas and pinpoint traffic problems. Traffic Master systems can be found as standard equipment in certain production models.

Oracle, a voice-based system designed to feed traffic information through car radios, was first installed by Vauxhall in 1996 on top-of-the-range GLS, SRI and CDX Vectra models. This year, all Citroën Xantias have a similar Oracle system as standard.

Imagine, though, having an in-car system which not only tells you about traffic problems, but also guides you out of them. From March, that becomes a reality. The new Jaguar S-Type is the first car in the world to have a fully integrated, on-board satellite navigation system, combined with live traffic information provided by Traffic Master.

David Martell, the company's chief executive, says: "In the face of ever-increasing levels of congestion, on-board driver information systems incorporating 'intelligent' route guidance and traffic information will soon become essential equipment."

That was just the sort of equipment I needed to find the BBC's research and development complex, hidden in a south-London suburb. The BBC's Transport Protocol Experts Group (TPEG) is broadcasting a pilot travel information service on digital radio. Glyn Jones, managing editor, BBC Digital Radio, says: "TPEG is a personal travel service. It allows the BBC to broadcast more travel news than we could ever cram into the full 24 hours on a radio station, but your radio will sift it and only give you the traffic news that affects you."

It is RDS with knobs on, but at the moment the test broadcasts can only be picked up on digital radios, or certain in-car systems with expensive decoders. The BBC expects hardware manufacturers to latch onto TPEG and incorporate it into in-car navigation systems. So in the near future there will be no need to be stuck on the M25, or anywhere else for that matter.

JAMES RUPPERT

Christmas comes but twice a year

From March, number plates are to change every six months. What difference will it make? By **James Ruppert**

MARCH IS the new August. Really, it is. Well, that is according to the motor trade's brand new almanac. As from 1 March, all new cars will be sporting a T at the start of the registration number. However, if buyers wait until September, the T will be replaced by a V.

So should buyers wait for the second letter? Will new and used cars become cheaper, or more expensive? Which will be the busier month: March or September? Could cars depreciate in value much faster? This revamped twice-yearly registration system seems to raise a lot of important questions.

First of all, why the change? The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders' (SMMT) official line is that the old 1 August registration system simply did not work.

"One change of letter a year puts enormous pressure on manufacturers to produce a huge slice of the year's output for one month," a spokesman says. "Around a quarter of all annual car sales are in August. So 500,000 new-car sales means 500,000 used-car trade-ins, which depresses car values."

It also meant that buyers were short-changed. They got less money for their part-exchange and there were doubts over some dealers' ability properly to prepare so many new cars at once. Not only that, what was sold was almost obsolete stock, because manufacturers traditionally launch revised and better-equipped models in September and October to coincide with the Motor Show.

In theory then, the twin peaks of March and September should be good news.

Manufacturers have been doing all they can to encourage buyers into S-registered cars and there have been some amazing deals with free insurance, servicing and finance packages. Around the country, clutches of delivery-mileage vehicles, registered to boost sales figures, are now up for grabs.

World of Cars, in Suffolk, has a batch of S-plated Fords, with savings of more than £4,000 on 1999 Mondeos and Fiestas. Even so, car sales in January were down at 181,842 against 232,055 in January 1998, although that was a record year. According to Paul Everitt, the SMMT's head of policy and economics: "The January registrations reflect the current economic climate and anticipate the arrival of the T plate in March."

"This is a transition period at the moment," says Paul Jarvis, managing editor of *Glass's Guide*, the trade's price-guide bible. "Consumers are only just becoming aware of the changes. However, we see March becoming the dominant month. The conditions are ideal for this, as Christmas debts have been settled and summer is coming.

"As for September, there will still be a desire for the latest registration plate and we will be listing three price blips in our publication for January, March and September."

CAP, *Glass's* price-guide rivals, sees things differently. Ramesh Notra, economic analyst at *CAP*, says: "We are going to see very significant changes. For example, anyone who continues working on the assumption that spring time will be uniformly better than the previous year-end is in for a rude awakening."

CAP expects the September plate change to have more impact than March. It also believes that seasonal factors will put more downward pressure on used car prices in 1999, especially towards the end of the year. CAP also warns that two plate changes a year may lead to faster depreciation as the latest letter premium is lost twice as quickly.

Consequently, buyers won't be so tempted to consider a change for the sake of a rapidly changing letter, which may result in fewer new car sales. As a result, *CAP* predicts there is boom time ahead for cherished number plates: "Many private buyers who do not want their new cars going out of date twice as quickly will be tempted to buy these plates."

Tony Hill, who runs Elite Registrations – one of the country's largest cherished-number dealers – says: "I haven't noticed a surge in demand because of the new system."

Obviously, everyone is on a steep learning curve. The dip in January new-car sales actually meant fewer part-exchanges and an unexpected rise in used-car values, as dealers could not find enough stock.

We will certainly know all the effects by the time the alphabetical system comes to end, with Y-registered cars in March 2001. After that, a whole new number-and-regional-identifier plate will bring with it a whole new set of problems, questions and implications.



MY WORST CAR

HELEN ZAHAVI'S SUNBEAM IMP

A seasonal non-starter

WHEN I bought the Imp it was already very old, but all I could afford at the time. The dealer who sold it to me was very pleasant, or at least I thought he was. Unfortunately, this blue Sunbeam turned out to be a complete disaster.

These Imps had their engines in the rear and that meant no proper cooling and constant overheating, which in turn meant new gaskets and frequent rebuilds.

I remember on one occasion collecting my mother from school. The car started to lose power and in the rear-view mirror I could see red-hot metal spewing out of the back. I struggled to keep going in the traffic, changing down through the gears, but eventually the car came to a halt.

We just sat there, wondering what to do. Then a very nice man offered to push us to the roadside. We made it more difficult for him by staying in the car. We didn't think to get out at the time.

The Imp was a seasonal car in that it overheated in the summer and refused to start at all in the winter. I managed to stop condensation getting into the engine by putting an oblong pillow I had bought from British Homes Stores into the engine bay. It would be soaking wet by the morning and occasionally I would forget to take it out again, and that would also help to bring the Sunbeam to an unscheduled halt.


The Sunbeam Imp: two years of hell for Helen Zahavi

In fact, water was a constant problem. The car had a serious leak, which let in lots of rainwater. I would be up to my ankles in water and would have to pull out all the carpets and dry them out.

Gradually, I learnt more about cars and bought exchange parts. A friend took me to a salvage yard for tyres. We would climb over mountains of them for the right ones. I thought that was how you bought tyres.

I only found out about tyre specialists when I drove past one and got a puncture. Actually, I got three punctures while driving past this particular garage – which could not have been a coincidence. I'm sure that they threw tacks out into the road.

It was two years of hell with that car. The throttle cable snapped while I was overtaking, which wasn't funny. That Sunbeam always cost me a lot of money and was either damp, or broken down, depending on the time of year. I couldn't sell it to a normal human being without feeling guilty, but I thought that a car dealer would be able to sort it out. I wonder if he ever did?

Helen Zahavi's latest novel, 'Donna and the Fatman' is published by Anchor on 11 March, price £6.99. She was speaking to James Ruppert

Hand over the keys and the survey details

New plans are afoot to put a greater burden of responsibility – and cost – on to people trying to sell their homes, to speed up the process and make it fairer all round. Let the vendor beware. By Penny Jackson



Sellers may be required to provide surveys, and details of all alterations and any structural problems *Jason Shillingford/DM*

It costs most of us nothing to put our homes on the market. We can sit back while it is valued and marketed, while the buyers pass through each stage *en route* to an exchange of contracts, clocking up expenses as they go.

No wonder Government proposals for the seller to pay for searches, surveys and the like have not been met with universal joy. But however valid the specific criticisms, few would argue that the time has come for sellers to play a more responsible role in the buying and selling process.

Indeed there has already been a quiet revolution in attitudes among estate agents and homeowners who want to see the balance redressed. These days vendors who delight in regaling their friends with stories of how they fooled their buyers are likely to draw only a wry smile. In practice, though, a seller's secrets are almost bound to be discovered, delaying the purchase, if not stopping it altogether.

It was the snail's pace of most sales, as well as the hazard of gazumping, that prompted the Government to review the system of house-buying. Since a great many sellers have a tendency to do nothing to facilitate a sale until an offer pops up, they are an obvious target for change.

Hugh Dunsmore-Hardy, chief executive of the National Association of Estate Agents, is of the opinion that the vendor should be far more responsible for providing information about the state of a property, even if it shifts the balance of cost from buyer to seller in the early stages of the process: "We must get away from the adversarial system based on the adage of *caveat emptor*."

There are those who need little persuasion. Patrick Barrington, who lives in Weymouth, Dorset, is one of a growing number who keeps a record of anything done to his house in a log book. "While the double glazing was being done, I took photographs of the ties in the cavity wall. I did the same when we were insulating our roof, in case a buyer was interested in how it was done."

And far from concealing any problems, Barrington has recorded them. "I have pictures of cracks so that a purchaser can see that nothing has moved and won't get agitated. I know what insurance companies are like."

He has, in the past, gone further than many sellers would want to and commissioned a building survey on a house he was selling. "We found a buyer immediately, who was delighted. It's ridiculous that one house can be surveyed numerous times. One I know that went to auction had 25 surveys done on it, all by the same firm."

A survey is the most controversial feature of any vendor's packet. Michael Day, a vice chairman of the Society for Valuers and Auctioneers, believes that it has more issues attached to it than first appear. "Will it really speed things up if a buyer wants his own survey? What happens if a few sellers in a chain don't have one? Will lenders accept it? After all, they will still need to do a valuation."

Another concern is how dependable it would be and what recourse buyers would have if a serious problem appeared in the house.

Certainly the reluctance of buyers to commission surveys is hardly encouraging – closer to 25 per cent than the 40 per cent quoted by the Government, according to Day. And only a third of those will opt for a detailed building survey.

But where estate agents strongly recommend a vendor's survey is on properties that need work. Guy Gibson of the surveyors and valuers with Hamptons International, says that if it is clear that a house needs a new roof, or certain repairs, its price will reflect that, and it will therefore become more saleable.

He says: "The days when you have uninformed purchasers are gone. We should move towards providing a survey that serves both buyer and seller. It would have a shelf life and stay with the property for that period."

At the very least, he says, a seller's packet should include things like title deeds, local searches, planning permission, guarantees, building regulation approval and so on – all the time-consuming features of a sale. An owner's log book is not a new idea, but it has begun to catch on.

Knight Frank, the estate agent, issues one to all its new purchasers so that when they come to sell they can demonstrate that the house has been cared for. "If all the documentation is kept up to date, and the seller can provide a legal package, exchange of contracts need take no longer than five days," says Martin Lamb.

Whatever the Government decides, it is almost bound to make new demands of the seller. Some estate agencies intend to get a head start. Black Horse Agencies, now owned by Bradford & Bingley Building Society, this week announced plans for a new "fast move" service, which includes a pre-market survey, a 95 per cent mortgage for buyers, insurance covering the sale's collapse, and a guarantee covering any structural faults not disclosed in the survey to be transferred to the purchaser on completion.

They expect the sale time to be halved. Estate agents are used to being criticised for doing little to earn their commission, but if sellers have to be ready with a packet for the purchaser, it is the agent who must oversee it. Could this be the answer to higher standards and a new professionalism? It will certainly widen the gap between the best and the rest.

STEPPING STONES

ONE COUPLE'S PROPERTY STORY



Chris and Andrea make a picture of domestic bliss

FEW BUYERS attain the home of their dreams and fewer still get there without excessive mortgaging. Chris and Andrea Masters have achieved both over 30 years and four purchases, with a mortgage in the Eighties of just £2,000.

Their story starts in Bermuda, where they rented for three years which enabled them, on their return in 1971, to buy outright a 16th-century Herefordshire town house for £3,500. The house, while steeped in history, was also "on the flight path of local quarry lorries" and the experience prompted the Masters to build their own home in "the best spot we've ever lived in" – a quiet orchard behind a church on the edge of town.

The plot cost £2,000 and by doing the work themselves, and using reclaimed materials, Andrea and architect Chris kept building costs to £5,000. In 1974 they sold their town house for £7,000 and moved into their "experimental and unconventional home with too much glass", which Chris describes as "arousing mixed feelings" in the village.

By 1977 a family addition and declining workload saw Chris returning to college to finish his architectural training and also to "sit-out the building industry's major recession". They sold their self-build house for £15,000 and for £14,250 bought an end-of-terrace in Cheltenham: "It was a big contrast but we enjoyed being back in an urban environment and looking onto a street filled with lights and people."

In 1980, Chris was working for an architect but, tiring of routine, he decided to go it alone finding endless variety at his "drawing board, laying bricks or even on a roof". This led to him enlarging their own house in an unusual way: "We built an extraordinary staircase in a tower on the gable end by slicing out a section from floor to roof." The addition made the house "delightful to live in" but added little value when the Masters sold in 1996 for £58,000.

They decided to move to France "where an English couple of modest means can afford a country house". Their purchase, La Cretouffière, turned out to be not one but three houses and a collection of barns bought for £34,000 which Chris is currently renovating. The long barn has been turned into three holiday homes at a cost of around £20,000 and current work includes a swimming pool and an art gallery.

The Pays de la Loire is ideal for short breaks and the project has brought many visitors, enabling Chris and Andrea to "earn a modest income" from their beautiful home and all achieved without a mortgage. Chris estimates that the hamlet's value is now c£80,000, a "moderate return for the work involved", but he has many plans for further improvements. And the future? "I'm driven by challenges but I can't see myself in a French old peoples' home."

GINETTA VEDRICKAS

Those moves in brief

1971 – bought 16th-century house for £3,500, sold for £7,000.
1974 – bought plot of land for £2,000 (built house for £5,000), sold for £15,000.
1977 – bought Cheltenham town house for £14,250, sold for £58,000.
1996 – bought French hamlet for £34,000, now worth around £80,000.

To contact La Cretouffière, call 0033 243 0800 20.

If you would like your moves to be featured write to: Nic Cicutti, Stepping Stones, One Canada Square, London E14 5DL. A prize of £100 will be awarded for the best story printed before 31 March

There's a lot going on down by the riverside

Developers are trying to meet the huge new demand for inner-city housing with an ambitious series of waterside properties to suit everyone. By Mary Wilson

RATTY MAY have looked after his riverbank home, but many of Britain's rivers and canals, which should provide some of the best locations for both residential and commercial units, have been allowed to fall into decay over the years.

However, with changing demographics, people are looking more and more for inner-city living and with urban regeneration being at the forefront of our minds, derelict waterside sites are at long last being returned to the public domain.

The British Waterways Board, the UK's largest navigation authority, owning some 2,000 miles of inland waters, is also active in the regeneration game. Last week the Government announced a new package to enable the BWB to continue its conservation work.

A recent study, commissioned by the BWB, of six canal development schemes showed that they had succeeded in increasing employment and visitors to the areas. By enhancing the local environment, residential property prices nearby rose by up to 20 per cent.

House-builders too are now helping to regenerate riverside sites and defunct dockland areas. The massive development work at London Docklands over the last 10 years, which continues, is a good example of how areas can be rejuvenated.

Along with building attractive residential or mixed-use schemes along the water, developers are renewing cycle paths, walkways and river frontages which local councils do not have, or wish to allocate, the funds for.

St George, for example, has a number of schemes along the Thames from the Isle of Dogs in the Docklands, east London, down to Kingston upon Thames in Surrey. At Lockes Wharf in E14, a development of 424 one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments and 40 three- and four-bedroom town houses, the company is creating a new riverside walkway with public access to the site. There will be a restaurant, square and water feature built for the benefit of the general public, as well as the apartment owners. Prices range from £104,950 to £384,950.

At Charter Quay in Kingston, 213 apartments, five four-bedroom town houses, a fitness centre, a 550-seat theatre, restaurants and retail units will be built. A new public access will be built through the site, linking the historic Market Square with the river, and a new riverside walk will be created. St George will also be restoring Hoggsmill Creek, putting new bridges over this and creating a wetlands area for local wildlife.

"This three-acre section of land has been shut off for years," says Tony Carey, managing director of St George. "It is particularly satisfying doing this sort of development because everyone is a winner. We are hoping to provide new homes, a new place for families to go, new jobs and new access to the river."

Prices will range from around £150,000 up to around £350,000.

In central Leeds, Berkeley Homes, in partnership with British Waterways, is planning a £100m waterside property development, adjacent to the River Aire and the Royal Armouries. On the 14-acre site, there will be a mix of residential, leisure and commercial properties creating a link along the waterfront from the city centre, through the Calls to the Royal Armouries. Knight Frank will be selling the properties.

In South Wales, a massive £2.4bn regeneration programme is under way at Cardiff Bay. By next spring, the long-awaited barrage should be in place, turning the smelly, muddy landscape into an attractive waterside location. Some 2,700 new homes are being built overlooking this new 500-acre freshwater lake, along with an assortment of commercial enterprises including a five-star hotel and a sports stadium. The American Bank One is building its European headquarters there.

One of the house-builders is St David, which is putting up 226 apartments and town houses at Adventurer's Quay, the first residential development by the new Inner Harbour. The company has also spent £70,000 building a bridge which gives public access from the residential to the commercial area.

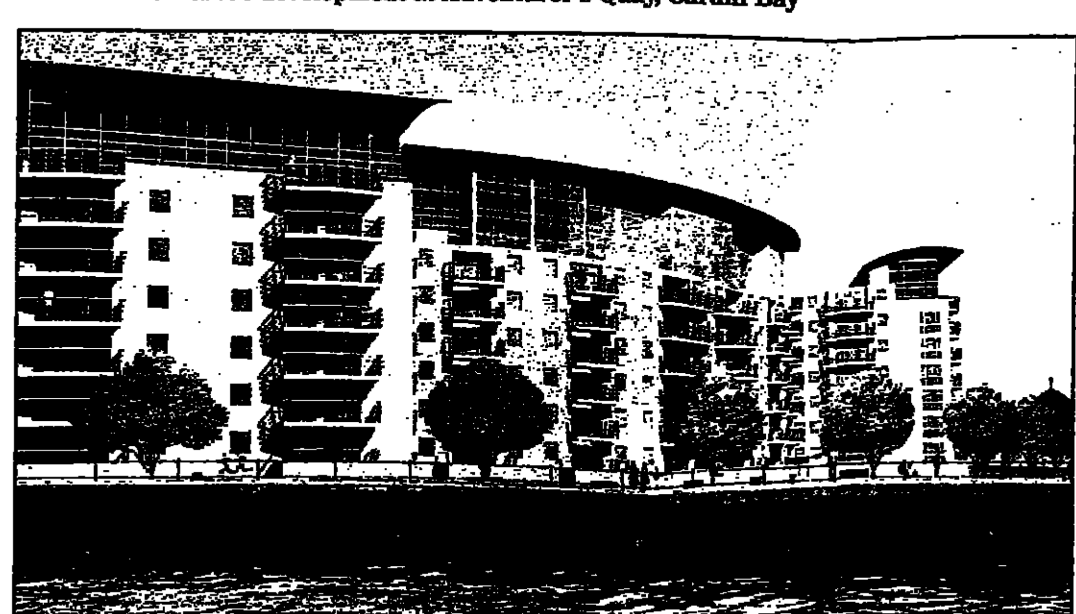
Two thirds of the development is already sold with properties available ranging from two- and three-bedroom apartments priced from £87,500 to £315,000. Euan Cresswell, managing director at St David, says: "It is already a very vibrant community. There is an assortment of restaurants and a leisure centre with 12 cinemas, all very busy, and the Welsh Assembly will be just 200 metres from our site. We recently brought back a couple of purchasers who bought last year and they were very surprised and impressed with how things have progressed."

And at Royal Leamington Spa in Warwickshire, McAlpine Homes Midlands is regenerating a former industrial site next to the Grand Union Canal. The scheme will consist of 10 three-bedroom houses and 88 one- and two-bedroom apartments and the company is creating a communal residents' walkway which runs adjacent to the canal. Prices start at £75,995.

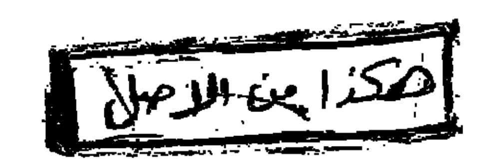
British Waterways Board, 01923 226422; St George, 0181-917 4000; Knight Frank, 01132 461533; St David, 01222 451085; McAlpine Homes, 01926 339365



An aerial view of the development at Adventurer's Quay, Cardiff Bay



Impression of the apartments at Fairview's Millennium Quay development at Greenwich

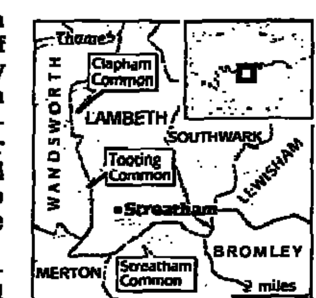


HOT SPOT

STREATHAM, SOUTH LONDON

Comfort for southerners

Streatham is not a northern suburb of Brighton. It's actually no further south than Wimbledon, and if the oft-promised tube line had ever actually materialised, it would seem much less remote to Londoners. In any event the place is fairly self-sufficient.



Streatham has three stations, for trains to Victoria and London Bridge, and an enormous number of buses, but local traffic is still horrendous.

Many houses in Streatham are huge, and a large number have been converted. The result is an abundance of flats and houses in all sizes, shapes and prices, including new homes. "Streatham also has unusual properties such as converted churches," says Townends manager Gayle Horne.

If a pleasant, affordable area is down the road from, and considerably cheaper than, Clapham, Wandsworth, Balham and Brixton, growing families from such pricier locales will inevitably get on their bikes and move.

"People from Clapham sell their two-bedroom flats and buy a family house in Streatham with the proceeds," says Ms Horne.

Or they move from a house to a property similar in size but appreciably cheaper and use the profit, says Nick Harrington, manager at the local Winkworths, to put their children into private school. State schools are also an option as "Streatham schools get rave reviews".

Buyers in the £250,000 to £500,000 category gravitate towards the Telford Park Estate, the area of Streatham closest to Clapham Park. "This area has many three-storey semi-detached Victorian houses," says Mr Harrington. To its south, "any of the roads leading from Tooting Bec Common have well-presented, cheaper, Victorian and Edwardian houses with four, five or six bedrooms."

Sunnyhill and Wellfield Roads form Streatham Village, "full of pretty two- and three-bedroom cottages built for railway workers and artisans between 1820 and 1900," says Mr Harrington. Some now have preservation orders on them.

Further south, Streatham Common has properties that include three-bedroom Edwardian, 1930s modern, and very grand five- and six-bedroom Victorian and Edwardian. "These roads can't be used as a rat run, so they are always quiet," Mr Harrington explains.

To the East is Streatham Vale, which has limited shopping, incredibly busy roads, tired houses and prices which reflect all of the above.

In Ms Horne's opinion, the best value is neither in the cheapest (Streatham Vale) nor the priciest (Telford Park Estate) areas: "Prices have already peaked in the area near Balham and Brixton Hill. Streatham Common has nice houses and hasn't yet peaked." Large ex-council houses are also available on the roads east of Streatham Hill.

ROBERT LIEBMAN

From schools to property, 'forgotten' Streatham has a lot to offer *Philip Meech*

THE LOW-DOWN

Prices: Prices decline as you move south, from £600,000-plus in Streatham Hill/Telford Park Estate, to half that in Streatham Common. Cottages in Streatham Village sell for £105,000-£145,000, lower in Streatham Vale. Flats cost about £35,000-£40,000 for a studio, £55,000-£75,000 for a one-bedroom, and £85-£135,000 for a two-bedroom.
Transport: Three rail stations, each on different lines. Streatham Common, the most southerly, serves Victoria, Clapham Common and London Bridge stations. Streatham station terminates at London Bridge, and Streatham Hill serves Victoria and, via Thameslink, Blackfriars and King's Cross. A brisk 30-minute walk to the west brings you to the tube in the form of Tooting Bec station, on the Northern Line. There is quick access to Gatwick Airport and the M25.
New build: Try Homes' 38-unit ParkGate has one- and two-bedroom flats and three-, four- and five-bedroom houses (starting at £99,950 and £195,000 respectively) on Garrads Road, SW16, opposite Tooting Bec Common. St James's St James Mews will consist of seven three-storey townhouses (£185,000) on Potter's Lane, SW16.
Gliding and riding: Between them, the 36-acre Streatham Common and the much larger Tooting Bec Common (150 acres) offer London's largest outdoor pool, horse-riding, tennis courts, a bowling green, and The Rookery.
Wining and dining: Streatham High Road has several cinemas and an ice rink; a Holmes Place leisure centre will open shortly, and decent wine bars and restaurants can't be far behind. "It's buzzy place for a London suburb," says Ms Horne.
Council tax: Band A £431, Band H is £1,294.
Agents: FPD Savills (Park Gate) 0181-769 3939; Townends 0181-769 9911; Winkworth 0181-769 6699

THREE TO VIEW

WILD ABOUT THE WEST



THE SCILLY Isles are about as far west as you can go in Britain, but there are very few properties for sale and none of them is cheap. One, on St Martin's, is North Farm, a three-bedroom farmhouse with one and a half acres and workshops. There's also a two-bedroom self-catering unit which is furnished and fully booked for the 1999 season. The house in Higher Town has a beamed sitting room with kitchen area and study. On the island there's a five-star hotel and a pub. Boats run regularly to the other islands, and the farm is about 400 yards from the sea in three directions. Offers in the region of £189,000; details from Island Properties (01720 422082).



It's a sailor's life on the south Devon coast at Kingsbridge, where No 21 The Moorings overlooks the Salcombe estuary. The two-bedroom, two-bathroom first-floor flat has a 27ft sitting room and views from a 13ft balcony which boasts timber decking and glazed windshield. There are two parking spaces within a protected security area, a dinghy parking space and running mooring. The communal gardens include a gazebo, a pergola and there is a shared store on the foreshore for keeping sails and boat equipment. Offers in the region of £189,000; details from Marchand Petit (01548 857588).



THERE ARE sea and country views from Two Coast Cottages at St Ives, in Cornwall. The four-bedroom house on Penwith Moors, south-west of the town, is away from the holiday crowds who flock here. It has a wood-burning stove in the dining room, exposed granite walls and a beamed ceiling in the study. Outside there is a garage, workshop, store rooms, loose box and dog run, with about 10 acres of paddocks. Offers in the region of £165,000; details from GA (01736 795212).

ROSALIND RUSSELL